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ABSTRACT

Early in the 21st century, Hispanic Americans will become the largest U.S. ethnic minority. By 2050, the Hispanic, or Latino, population is projected to number around 100 million and constitute 25% of the U.S. population, up from 11% in 1996. This "Population Bulletin" looks at three aspects of the U.S. Hispanic population: (1) their growing numbers; (2) their increasing diversity; and (3) their relative well-being. Immigration has contributed about one-third of the recent growth of the Hispanic population. It has also changed the Hispanics' ethnic profile by increasing the share of Central and South Americans. Future levels of Hispanic immigration will depend on U.S. policies, political events, and economic health, but immigration is likely to continue for the foreseeable future. Fertility will contribute most future population growth. Many socioeconomic factors, including the choice of marriage partner, will affect the future fertility (and consequently the size) of the U.S. Hispanic population. Hispanics' low average socioeconomic status presents many barriers to their full participation in U.S. society and political life. Improving Hispanics' educational attainment is key to enhancing their well-being, but the U.S. public must also be willing to acknowledge their contribution and to help them to succeed. (Contains 9 tables, 13 figures, 4 boxes, and 87 references.) (Author/SLD)

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Generations of Diversity: Latinos in The United States

by Jorge del Pinal and Audrey Singer

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Early in the 21st century, Hispanic Americans will become the nation's largest ethnic minority. High immigration rates and relatively high birth rates have boosted the growth rate of the Hispanic population above that of any other major U.S. racial or ethnic group except Asians. The Hispanic, or Latino, population is projected to swell from 28 million in 1996 to about 100 million in 2050, and is projected to outnumber African Americans by 2005.[1]

Latinos already compose about 40 percent of the school-age population in California, and are projected to form a majority of that state's public school enrollment by 2006.[2]

The history of Americans of Spanish heritage predates the founding of the United States. However, in the 1990s, about two-thirds of the U.S. residents who identify themselves as Hispanics or Latinos are immigrants or the children of immigrants. Less than one-third are the U.S.-born children of U.S.-born parents. Nevertheless, this population of newcomers is heir to a long, and at times turbulent, history of relations between the ethnic majority—non-Hispanic whites—and the peoples of Mexico and other Spanish-speaking countries of Latin America. Latinos are a product of one of the most important migration streams of the second half of the 20th century: people moving from Latin America to the United States.

The sheer number of Latinos makes them an important and visible segment of the U.S. population, but many other factors keep them in the news and high on public policy agendas. Latinos are concentrated geographically in a handful of states and cities. They share a common Spanish-language heritage, a disadvantaged minority status, and a public image as newcomers who are welcomed by some and resented by others. Their socioeconomic and demographic characteristics are transforming contemporary America.

The public image of Hispanics is muddled by misinformation and confusion. Some confusion is understandable because Latinos are highly diverse. Even the terms that describe these Americans are disputed.

Hispanics are an ethnic group, not a racial group, according to U.S. government guidelines, but this distinction escapes most Americans. Hispanics can be of any race. Most classify themselves as white, a minority classify themselves as black, and an increasing share identify their race as "other," which underscores the ambiguity of race and ethnic-group definitions in the United States.

Hispanic is the term used to describe the group in most U.S. government publications, yet the term has no firm historical link to the people it describes. It was chosen by U.S. government agencies as a convenient, inoffensive label that could be applied to all people from the Spanish-speaking countries of Latin America and from Spain (see Box 1, page 4). The term Latino is also gaining acceptance among the general public. (Latino and Hispanic are used interchangeably in this *Population Bulletin* to refer to U.S. residents who trace their origins to the Spanish-speaking countries of Latin America and to Spain.) Many other terms are or have been used to describe these Americans, but many Hispanics prefer to be known by their ethnic or national origin: Mexican, Cuban, Puerto Rican, Salvadoran, or by other terms that denote national origin, place of birth, or community. Latinos are not a monolithic group. They encompass people from various national backgrounds and social classes with distinct settlement and immigration histories.

People of Mexican origin are the largest group, but the numbers from Central and South America are growing as streams of migrants flow north to the United States. Hispanic ethnic groups are concentrated in different regions, states, and urban areas (Cubans in Miami, Mexicans in the Southwest, and Puerto Ricans in New York, for example).

The differences between, and even within, the Hispanic ethnic groups sometimes are as great as their similarities. While Cubans and Puerto Ricans may speak Spanish and share Caribbean roots, they tend to have different political leanings and educational and economic characteristics. A third-generation, college-educated Mexican American may feel little commonality with a recent immigrant from rural Mexico who has little formal education.

Latinos' diversity is a source of pride for many and a point of confusion for others. This diversity also is embodied in the controversy over the

Compared with the total U.S. population, the Hispanic population is young, with proportionately more children and fewer elderly.

Box 1

Evolving Terminology for Americans of Hispanic Origin

The idea that people of Latin American descent form a single group within the United States did not really exist until the mid-1960s.[1] Prior to that time, individuals were largely identified as Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, and so on—that is, by their national origins and not by their birthplaces. Many immigrants are first confronted with the idea of Hispanic ethnicity when they arrive in the United States.[2]

During the 1960s, renewed interest in ethnic identity coincided with increasing immigration from Latin America to fuel a search for a common label for Americans with historical links to Spanish-speaking countries. People of Latin American descent have been labeled and relabeled from both within and outside their group in much the same way that people of African descent were labeled Negro and colored, black and Afro-American, and, most recently, African American.

But different terms may be appropriate for specific groups or certain situations. For whom is Hispanic or Latino the correct term? Is someone of Mexican origin Chicano, Mexican, or Mexican American? Which term is most appropriate for Puerto Ricans, people originating from Central and South America, or for Spaniards? The profusion of terms over the past 30 years stems from these subgroups' experiences with identity issues, regional differences in settlement patterns, and generational differences that often are politically charged.

In 1973, the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare adopted the term Hispanic at the recommendation of the Task Force on Racial/Ethnic Categories. The term may be applied to persons whose descent is tied to Spain or Spanish-speaking Latin American countries. The U.S. Census Bureau and other government agencies, along with other large institutions and businesses, followed suit, giving the term mainstream acceptance. Hispanic is generally viewed as a nonthreatening, neutral term that avoids negative associations with national-origin labels. For some people, however, the term Hispanic implies political conservatism. The term is more popular on the East Coast, especially among Puerto Ricans and Cubans.

The term Latino originated in the West and Midwest, and has been adopted by groups that reject Hispanic as a government-imposed label. These groups also argue that the term Hispanic is so broad that it includes everyone of Hispanic heritage, including those from Spain, thus sabotaging the struggle for equality by Latinos in the United States. Latino

appropriate term for this group. Whatever term is used, the well-being of this group of U.S. residents increasingly is important to the well-being of the nation.

This *Population Bulletin* focuses on three aspects of U.S. Latinos: their diversity, their rapid growth, and their place within U.S. society. Hispanics are usually classified as a disadvantaged minority because of their long history of discrimination and unequal educational and occupational opportunities. This report looks at how they are faring, and how immigration affects their demographic and socioeconomic profile.

Latino Roots

People of Spanish heritage have lived in what is now the United States since the 16th century. The Spanish established St. Augustine, Florida in 1565, and Santa Fe, New Mexico around 1609. Spain ruled much of

refers to people of Latin American descent living within the United States, particularly those who were born here. Persons who identify themselves as Latinos tend to be more involved than self-identified Hispanics in enhancing the political rights and economic opportunities of their group. Women activists have been concerned that the term Latino is too narrow and refers only to male members of the group and have advocated using Latina to refer to women.

But Latino is not preferred by most Hispanics. A 1995 survey by the Census Bureau found that 58 percent of persons of Hispanic/Latino background preferred the term Hispanic; only 12 percent favored Latino.

The term Latino is most popular in areas with the greatest concentrations of Mexican Americans and Mexicans. Its currency in the Southwest, West, and Midwest is related to the term Chicano (and Chicana for women), which was adopted in California in the 1960s by a group of young Mexican Americans. The term soon became the label for a militant civil rights movement that rebelled not only against U.S. mainstream society but also against an older generation of Mexican Americans to whom the word Chicano meant punk and delinquent. Another term, Hispano, is commonly used by New Mexicans descended from Spanish settlers.[3]

Mexican American and Mexican tend to be used by persons who still identify strongly with their nation of origin; the terms Mexican or Mexicano tend to identify the foreign-born. Similarly, the term Neuyoricans has been used to distinguish Puerto Ricans in New York from those in Puerto Rico. Puerto Ricans who reject the image and heritage of European colonization often use the term Boricua, derived from Borinquen, the indigenous name for Puerto Rico.

Latino and Hispanic do not refer to race in the U.S. context. They are cultural, social, political, and administrative labels that refer to the ethnic background of individuals. Thus, Hispanics can be of any race.

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1. The majority of this information was adapted from Jose Cuello, "Latinos and Hispanics: A Primer on Terminology" (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University, unpublished manuscript, 1997).
2. See Frank D. Bean and Marta Tienda, *The Hispanic Population of the United States* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1987).
3. Suzanne Oboler, *Ethnic Labels, Latino Lives: Identity and the Politics of (Re)Presentation in the United States* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).

what is now the southwestern United States, as well as Central and South America, until the middle of the 19th century. After Mexico won independence from Spain in 1821, the portions of the Spanish territory in the United States fell under Mexican hegemony. Texas won its independence from Mexico in 1836, and joined the United States in 1845. The remaining Mexican territory was ceded to the United States in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of 1848, at the conclusion of the war with Mexico. The treaty brought the United States land that later became the states of Arizona, California, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah, and parts of Colorado and Wyoming. The former Mexican citizens in these areas became citizens of the United States and created the core of the nation's Hispanic population. Individuals of Mexican descent still comprise a large portion of the population in these areas.[1]

Table 1

Generations of U.S. Residence for Hispanics and Selected Ethnic/Racial Groups, 1996

Race/ethnicity and age	Total population (thousands)	Generation		
		First[1]	Second[2]	Third or higher[3]
		Percent of total		
Non-Hispanics	235,876	6	9	86
Hispanics[4]	25,315	38	30	32
Hispanics under age 18	9,111	13	52	35
Hispanics age 18 and over	16,204	52	18	31

[1] Foreign-born of foreign-born parents.
[2] U.S.-born with at least one foreign-born parent; or foreign-born outside of marriage to U.S.-born parent.
[3] U.S.-born of U.S.-born parents.
[4] Includes Asians, Pacific Islanders, American Indians, Eskimos, Aleuts, and others not classified as Hispanic.
Excludes Puerto Ricans.
Note: Percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding.
Source: Authors' calculations based on the March 1996 Current Population Survey.

Although Latinos have been present in the United States since its beginning, the Latino population continues to be renewed by waves of immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean. New immigrants often bring their families, but they also form families and have children after arriving in the United States. More than two-thirds of the Latinos residing in the United States are immigrants or the children of immigrants. In 1996, more than one-third of Hispanics were first-generation Americans (foreign-born of foreign-born parents) and one-third were second-generation Americans (U.S.-born with at least one foreign-born parent). Less than one-third of Hispanics were third generation or higher (U.S.-born of U.S.-born parents), as shown in Table 1.

The recency of their immigration experience contrasts sharply with that of whites and blacks*, most of whom trace their U.S. residency back three or more generations. Only the Other non-Hispanic group—which is dominated by Asians, another recent immigrant group—has a greater percentage of first- and second-generation Americans than Latinos.

Many first-generation Latinos maintain close ties to their native countries, speak little English, and live in ethnic enclaves with other immigrants. Their children, second-generation Latinos, often are torn between two contrasting cultures: their parents' heritage and mainstream American society. Spanish often is their first language, but they generally learn English quickly after they begin school.

The second generation has garnered considerable attention from researchers and academics, who are examining their progress in school, success in the labor market, retention of Spanish, marriage patterns, and other factors that indicate how this second generation is adapting to the dominant culture. Many look to the second generation as the key to Latino ethnic identity in the future. Will Latinos blend in with the larger society, as did the European immigrants who arrived at the turn of the century? Does maintaining a Latino identity mean remaining economically and socially marginalized and disadvantaged? These questions have far-reaching implications for the well-being of the U.S. Hispanic population and for the nation as a whole.[5]

The late sociologist Morris Janowitz, for example, voiced concern that "Spanish-speaking populations are creating a bifurcation in the social-political structure of the United States."[6] Alternatively, political scientist Peter Skerry has argued that the central issue is not whether Mexicans, and by implication all Latinos, will become like other

* The terms white and black refer to non-Hispanic whites and non-Hispanic blacks, except where noted otherwise.

Americans, but rather under what conditions:

"*While ... there is good reason to believe that Mexican Americans will advance socially and economically, ...it is not clear that these gains will be sufficient to satisfy [their] aspirations ...or to allay the fears of other Americans that this group will prove a net burden on this society. Much will hinge on the criteria used to evaluate the extent and pace of [their] advancement.*"

Linda Chavez, a political commentator and analyst, argues that most Hispanics "lead solidly lower-middle- or middle-class lives, but finding evidence to support this thesis is sometimes difficult." First, "Hispanic groups vary one from another," and second, "immigration, legal and illegal" consisting "mostly of poorly educated persons, with minimal skills, who cannot speak English" cannot help but "seriously distort evidence of Hispanics' progress."

Demographer Jorge Chapa concludes, "it is simply wrong to assume that Hispanics are making gradual progress towards parity with Anglos" even after factoring out immigrants.

Demographers Frank Bean and Marta Tienda point out that Mexican Americans in the Southwest "... lost their land, their social mobility became blocked, and that this eventually led to the deterioration of their social position vis à vis Anglos" and that "their brown skin and indigenous features encouraged racism and discrimination by the Anglo majority."

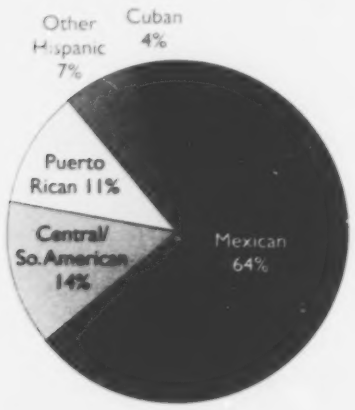
Still, Peter Skerry argues that while there is evidence of discrimination, particularly in the past, "[t]he barriers [to socioeconomic advancement] facing Mexican Americans today have less to do with race than with language and social class, both functions of their position as recently arrived immigrants."

Ethnic Diversity

Most Hispanic adults in the United States are foreign-born in every major Hispanic group except Puerto Ricans and Other Hispanics. Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens whether they are born on the U.S. mainland or in the U.S. Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. They may move freely between the mainland and Puerto Rico, and are not considered international migrants.

Figure 1

U.S. Hispanics by Ethnicity or National Origin, 1996



Source: Authors' calculations based on the March 1996 Current Population Survey.

In 1996, 81 percent of Cuban and 87 percent of Central and South American adults were foreign-born or foreign-born parents. Only 2 percent of the adults, and less than 6 percent of the children in either group, were third generation or higher.

Central and South Americans have the largest percentage of recent immigrants. Nearly one-half (48 percent) of the 2.4 million Hispanics of Central and South American origin counted in the 1990 census entered the United States in the previous decade (see Table 2, page 10). This group has continued to grow because of immigration and relatively high fertility. By 1996, the number of Hispanics of Central and South American origin had reached 4.1 million and made up 14 percent of U.S. Latinos (see Figure 1).

More than two-thirds (68 percent) of Central and South American Hispanics in the 1990 census identi-

Central and South Americans have the largest percentage of recent immigrants.

Box 2

Puerto Ricans

Residents of Puerto Rico have a special status in the United States. They are U.S. citizens and can vote for the governor of Puerto Rico, yet they have no voting representation in the U.S. Congress and cannot vote for the U.S. president.

But because the island is a U.S. commonwealth and collects its own population statistics, Puerto Ricans (who are mostly of Hispanic origin) do not count as part of the U.S. Hispanic population unless they move to one of the 50 states or the District of Columbia.

Puerto Rico became a Spanish colony when Columbus landed there in 1493 and remained one until 1898, when it became a U.S. possession following the Spanish-American War—along with Cuba, Guam, and the Philippines. In 1917, Congress granted Puerto Ricans U.S. citizenship and removed any legal impediments to their movement between the island and the mainland.

Puerto Ricans have lived in the United States since the late 1700s, but began arriving in large numbers during and after World War II.[1] According to the 1940 census, Puerto Rico's population was 1.9 million; about 70,000 persons born on the island lived on the U.S. mainland. During World War II, federal agencies recruited workers in Puerto Rico and directed them to mainland areas that had wartime labor shortages.[2] Most of these Puerto Rican workers and their families ended up in or around New York City. Later, Puerto Ricans migrated to other states, finding work, for example, in Hawaiian sugar cane fields and Arizona cotton fields. Others joined the U.S. military and were introduced to other areas of the United States.[3]

In the postwar years, inexpensive air transportation, the availability of jobs on the mainland, and the scarcity of good employment on the island set the stage for a large-scale movement from Puerto Rico to the mainland.[4] In 1950, the island's population was 2.2 million, and 300,000 Puerto Ricans (226,000 of them born on the island) lived on the mainland. About that time, increased contraception use led

fied themselves with one of five countries: El Salvador, Colombia, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Ecuador. Another 800,000 Hispanics traced their origins to Peru, Honduras, Argentina, or another Spanish-speaking country in Central and South America.

Cuban Americans also predominately are first- and second-generation Americans, but they are part of a much older migration stream. Well-established Cuban communities have existed in Miami, New York, and a few other U.S. cities for decades. About one-half of the Cubans in the 1990 census had entered the United States before 1980—most arrived during a period surrounding the 1959 Cuban Revolution. Less than one-fifth of the 1990 Cuban population entered between 1980 and 1990. Several waves of Cubans have entered the United States since 1980 (see Immigration section), but they do not approach the huge numbers who arrived in the 1960s. Hispanics of Cuban descent numbered 1,053,000 in 1990; by 1996 they numbered 1,127,000, about 4 percent of U.S. Hispanics.

Latinos of Mexican descent make up 64 percent of the Hispanic population. In 1996, more than 18 million Hispanics of Mexican descent lived in the United States. Although many Mexicans have been here for generations—some from families established in the American Southwest in the 1600s—Mexicans also are a large part of the recent immigrant waves from Latin America. In 1996, more than 70-percent of U.S. Hispanics of Mexican

to a substantial decline in fertility on the island.[5] Puerto Rico's population grew by only 0.6 percent annually during the 1950s, compared with a rate of 10.9 percent on the mainland.

By the 1960s, however, New York and other northern states were losing manufacturing and other businesses that had traditionally employed Puerto Ricans, setting the stage for a return migration to Puerto Rico. New York lost 173,000 jobs during the 1960s and another 450,000 jobs between 1971 and 1976. Other areas with Puerto Rican populations also suffered economically. In 1972, Bridgeport, Conn., facing a 50 percent unemployment rate, offered unemployed Puerto Ricans a one-way ticket back to the island.[6]

Despite the economic hardships, Puerto Ricans continued to arrive on the mainland, though in fewer numbers. Recent estimates suggest that the island no longer has a net outflow of migrants to the United States. By 1996, an estimated 3.1 million Puerto Ricans lived in the United States, with another 3.8 million living in Puerto Rico.

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5. Harriet B. Presser and Sunita Kishor, "Economic Development and Occupational Sex Segregation in Puerto Rico," *Population and Development Review* 17, no. 1 (1991): 61.
6. Moore and Pachon, *Hispanics in the United States*: 47.
7. Ibid.: 35, 54.

descent were immigrants or the children of immigrants. Less than 30 percent were third generation or higher. Despite the continuous, high migration flow from Mexico, the post-1980 immigrants make up about one-fifth of the large Mexican-American population.

The Other Hispanics group is the fourth largest Hispanic group, numbering more than 2 million in 1996. This extremely diverse group has a high proportion of first- and second-generation Americans, but also includes those who identify themselves as Hispanos, individuals who trace their ancestry to the Spaniards who conquered what is now the southwestern United States.[11]

Dominicans are the largest single group within the Other Hispanics category, representing about one-fifth of the total (see Table 2, page 10). They also are the primary immigrant component of the Other Hispanics group.

Of the one-half million Dominicans counted in the 1990 census, 71 percent were foreign-born and 38 percent had entered the United States in the previous decade. In contrast, the overwhelming majority of Hispanics who identified themselves as Spaniard, Spanish, or Spanish American were native-born.

Puerto Ricans are a special case because they are U.S. citizens at birth (see Box 2). They are not counted as part of the U.S. Hispanic population unless they live in a state or the District of Columbia. Puerto Ricans are the largest single Hispanic group,

Table 2

Selected Characteristics of Hispanic Ethnic Groups, 1990

Hispanic group	1990 Population (thousands)	Percent of Hispanics	Foreign-born (percent)	Entered U.S. 1980-1990 (percent)
Hispanics	21,900	100.0	36	18
Mexicans	13,393	61.2	33	17
Puerto Ricans	2,652	12.1	15	04
Cubans	1,053	4.8	72	19
Central Americans	1,324	6.0	79	55
Salvadorans	565	2.6	81	61
Guatemalans	269	1.2	80	55
Nicaraguans	203	0.9	81	60
Hondurans	131	0.6	77	52
Panamanians	92	0.4	67	28
Costa Ricans	51	0.2	69	29
Other	7	—	75	41
South Americans	1,016	4.7	75	38
Colombians	379	1.7	74	38
Ecuadorans	191	0.9	74	32
Peruvians	179	0.8	77	48
Argentinians	101	0.5	77	31
Chileans	59	0.3	71	31
Venezuelans	48	0.2	71	30
Bolivians	38	0.2	76	47
Uruguayans	22	0.1	83	38
Paraguayans	7	—	72	42
Other	5	—	68	27
Other Hispanic origin	2,442	11.1	12	16
Dominicans	520	2.4	71	56
Spaniard	519	2.4	17	6
Spanish	448	2.0	16	7
Spanish American	93	0.4	1	1
All other	865	3.9	28	15

na—Not applicable.
— Less than 0.05 percent.
Note: Populations for specific groups may not add to ethnic group totals because of rounding.
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1990 Census of Population and Housing, CP-3-3, Persons of Hispanic Origin in the United States*, table 1.

after Mexicans. In 1996, an estimated 3.1 million Puerto Ricans lived in the United States, about 11 percent, of Hispanics. An additional 3.8 million people (primarily Hispanics) live in Puerto Rico.

The recency of the immigration of so many Latinos has a bearing on Latinos' other demographic, social, and political characteristics. On average, Hispanic Americans are younger than the general population, and are not as proficient with English. Many cannot vote because they are not citizens. They are more likely to be working and to have lower educational attainment than native-born Americans. Their geographic concentration reflects the destination of the immigrant stream that brought them, their parents, or perhaps their great-great-grandparents to the United States.

Where Latinos Live

Hispanics live in every state, but historically their population is concentrated in nine states: California, Texas, New York, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, Arizona, New Mexico, and Colorado. About 85 percent of Hispanics lived in these states in the mid-1990s. The largest population of Latinos is in California, where approximately 9 million, or one-third of all Latinos, resided in 1996. About 5 million Hispanics lived in Texas, 2.5 million in New York, 2 million in Florida, and 1 million in Illinois (see Figure 2).

The proportion of Hispanics in each state has tended to increase over time because of faster population growth among Hispanics than among non-Hispanics. New Mexico has the highest proportion of Hispanics, with more than one in three (39 percent) of the state's 1.7 million residents claiming Hispanic origin. Latinos make up 28 percent of California's 31 million residents, and 27 percent of Texas's 18 million population. About one-fifth of Arizona's 4 million residents are of Hispanic origin.

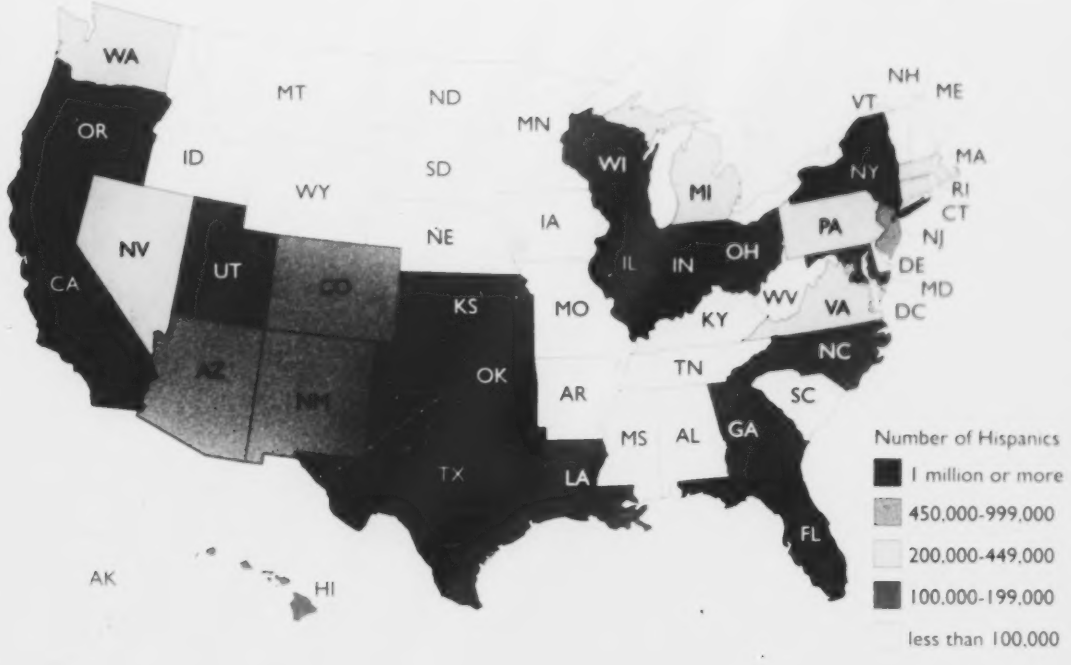
People of Mexican origin are concentrated in the southwestern states, but Illinois has a large Mexican-origin community, which is centered in the Chicago area. Since the late 1800s, Mexicans have migrated to the Midwest: initially to work in agriculture and on the railroads, and later to fill factory jobs.

Mexicans make up more than three-fourths of Latinos in California, Texas, Illinois, and Arizona, and well over half of Latinos in New Mexico and Colorado.

Puerto Ricans are one of the largest Hispanic groups in New York (44 percent in 1996), followed by Central and South Americans (29 percent).

Figure 2

Hispanic Population of States, 1996



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census. Accessed on-line at http://www.census.gov/population/projections/state/pr95to00/, on 20 Dec. 1996.

Cubans are the largest Latino group in Florida (38 percent), followed by Central and South Americans (25 percent). Puerto Ricans and Mexicans make up fairly large proportions of Florida's Latino population as well (16 percent and 15 percent, respectively).

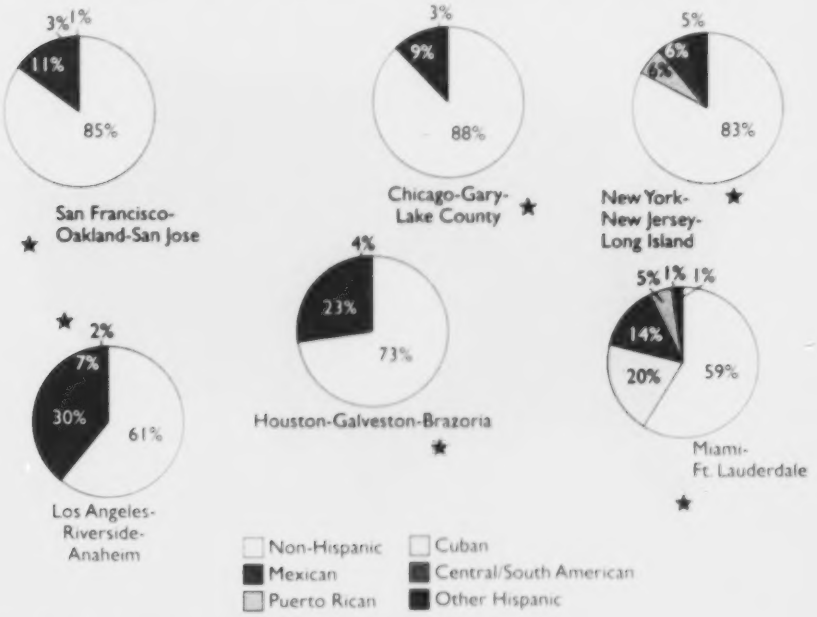
Hispanic Metropolitan Areas

Latinos are an overwhelmingly urban population. Although the first large stream of Latino migrants came to the United States to work in agriculture in the 1940s,[7] subsequent immigrants gravitated to a handful of metropolitan areas where jobs were more plentiful and emerging ethnic communities offered them social and economic support. About 90 percent of Latinos lived in metropolitan areas in 1990, compared with 76 percent of non-Hispanics. Nearly one-half lived in the six metropolitan areas with 1 million or more Latino residents in 1996: Los Angeles, New York, Miami, San Francisco, Chicago, and Houston (see Figure 3, page 12). About 6.1 million Latinos—more than one-fifth of all Latinos—lived in the Los Angeles metropolitan area in 1996.

Latinos have a high profile in Los Angeles and Miami, where they are about 40 percent of the population, but these two areas are home to very different Hispanic populations. Los Angeles, which was part of Mexico in the early 1800s and is less than 200 miles from the Mexican border, is dominated by Hispanics who claim Mexican roots. Nearly 80 percent of Los Angeles's 1996 Latino population was Mexican. Southern California also is a common destination for Salvadoran and Guatemalan immigrants, many of whom enter the United States through Mexico.[8] Central and South

Figure 3

Six Largest Hispanic Metropolitan Areas, by Ethnic Group, 1996



Note: Figures are for Consolidated Metropolitan Areas (CMSAs).
Source: Authors' calculations based on the March 1996 Current Population Survey.

Americans comprised another 17 percent of Los Angeles's Hispanic population in 1996.

Miami's Latino population has strong Caribbean roots, reflecting the city's close proximity to that region. Southern Florida was the primary destination of Cubans fleeing the Communist takeover in 1959, as well as the 1980 Mariel boat lift. In 1995, Miami was the intended residence for three-fourths of the U.S. immigrants from Cuba, according to Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) records. Miami also has a large Puerto Rican community and a growing population of Colombians and Nicaraguans.

Hispanics—predominately Mexicans—make up more than one-quarter of the population of the Houston metropolitan area. In 1996, Mexican Americans accounted for 23 percent of that area's 4.3 million residents; Central and South Americans made up another 4 percent. Texas, like portions of other southwestern states, was once part of Mexico and has a large Mexican American community. These cultural roots, along with the long border with Mexico, make the state's cities a favored destination for the recent wave of immigrants.

The Hispanic population share is much larger in many of the smaller Texas metropolitan areas and cities, especially those along the Mexican border. The 1990 census showed Hispanics made up 48 percent of the residents in San Antonio, 70 percent in El Paso, and more than 80 percent in the border cities of Brownsville, Laredo, and McAllen.[11]

Mexican Americans also dominate the San Francisco metropolitan area's Latino population. They made up 11 percent of the area's total number of residents and 69 percent of the area's Latino population. Like Los Angeles,

Table 3

Growth of the U.S. Population by Hispanic Origin, 1970-1996

Race/ ethnic group	1970 Number (thousands)	1980 Number (thousands)	1980 Percent increase (1970-1980)	1990 Number (thousands)	1990 Percent increase (1980-1990)	1996 Number (thousands)	1996 Percent increase (1990-1996)
Total U.S.	203,212	226,546	11.5	248,710	9.8	264,314	6.3
Total non-Hispanic	194,139	211,937	9.2	226,356	6.8	235,876	4.2
Hispanic	9,073	14,609	61.0	22,354	53.0	28,438	27.2
Mexican	4,532	8,740	92.9	13,496	54.4	18,039	33.7
Puerto Rican	1,429	2,014	40.9	2,728	35.5	3,123	14.5
Cuban	545	803	47.3	1,044	30.0	1,127	8.0
Other	2,566	3,051	18.9	5,086	66.7	6,149	20.9

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population: 1990 Subject Reports* PC(2)-1C (June 1993), table 1; *1980 Census of Population* PC80-1-B1 (May 1983), tables 40 and 48; *1990 Census of Population*, STF-1C, 1992; and authors' calculations based on the March 1996 Current Population Survey.

San Francisco has historical links to Mexico and has long been an immigrant magnet. A thriving community of Nicaraguans also has emerged there over the past two decades.

Chicago has long attracted immigrants from all over the world. Rapid industrial growth at the beginning of the 20th century brought thousands of immigrants from Europe, and later African American migrants from the southern United States. By the 1920s, immigrants from Mexico also contributed to the area's large foreign labor supply. While industrial employment has fallen over the past several years, the city continues to attract immigrants from Latin America, as well as from Asia and Europe. But Chicago's Hispanic population still is overwhelmingly Mexican. Mexicans made up three-fourths of the area's Latinos and 9 percent of Chicago's residents in 1996. The Chicago metropolitan area also is home to sizable communities of Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Guatemalans, Colombians, and other Central and South Americans.

The New York and northern New Jersey metropolitan area is about 17 percent Hispanic. Puerto Ricans are the largest single Hispanic group, making up about 6 percent of the metropolitan area's 20 million residents in 1996. They account for more than one-third of the metropolitan area's 3.3 million Hispanics. Many immigrated from Puerto Rico in the 1950s and 1960s.

Central and South Americans, dominated by Colombians, Ecuadorians, and Salvadorans, make up 6 percent of New York's Latinos. The Other Hispanics group, which consists primarily of Dominicans, is the second largest Hispanic ethnic group in New York. Dominicans, along with Cubans and smaller Hispanic groups, made up 5 percent of New York's population in 1996.

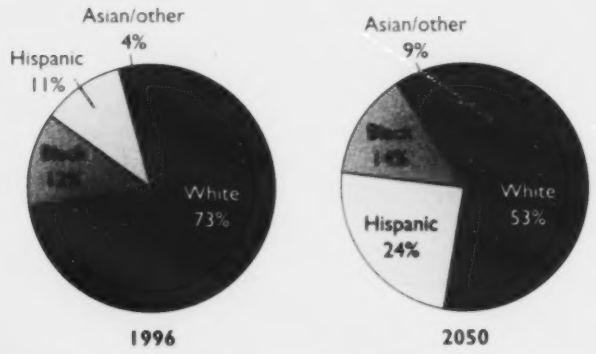
Puerto Ricans, the second largest Hispanic group nationally, also form a large proportion of the Hispanic populations of other metropolitan areas in the Northeast. They were nearly 70 percent of the Latino population in the Philadelphia area, and more than 50 percent in the Boston area in 1996. Puerto Ricans also are the predominant group in Cleveland's relatively small Hispanic population.

Many other metropolitan areas have distinct and visible Hispanic communities. Washington, D.C., for example, has a vibrant Central and South American immigrant population, one of the nation's largest Salvadoran communities, and growing numbers of Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Peruvians, Guatemalans, Cubans, and Nicaraguans.

The Hispanic population within metropolitan areas tends to concen-

Figure 4

The U.S. Population by Race and Ethnicity, 1996 and 2050



Note: The white, black and Asian/other categories exclude Hispanics, who may be of any race. The Asian/other category includes American Indians, Eskimos, Aleuts, and Pacific Islanders.
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports* P25-1130, table 1.

trate in specific neighborhoods, although Latinos are less residentially segregated than blacks.[15] New immigrants tend to reside in established communities and neighborhoods, thus increasing the visibility of the Hispanic populations.

Nonmetropolitan Areas

In the past decade or so, immigrants and refugees have increasingly contributed to the labor force in rural and suburban areas throughout the United States.[16] Traditionally, foreign-born Hispanics, particularly Mexicans, have worked in agriculture in Texas, California, and other southwestern states. In recent years, Latinos also have worked in labor-intensive industries throughout the country, picking apples in rural Michigan, New York, and Washington, for example, or processing meat and poultry in Wisconsin, Illinois, Tennessee, and Georgia.

Industrial and agricultural restructuring in the Midwest has emphasized assembly-line processes that require low-wage, low-skilled workers, and has created opportunities for Latinos. Swift-Armour, Monfort, and other large meat processors in the rural Midwest, for example, offer year-round employment with higher, more stable wages than seasonal farmworkers can expect. Owner-operated farms in the region are giving way to agribusinesses that increasingly hire Latinos to raise the pigs, cattle, and poultry that supply meatpacking plants.[17] The low wages, lack of benefits, and high injury rates in many of these jobs favor a high turnover, which often creates a constant stream of Latino families moving in or out of an area.

Hispanic immigrants now live in areas, often in small communities, that have little or no experience with immigrants or with Latinos. Communities in rural New York, for example, are struggling to provide housing, education, and other services to a growing population of young adults and families with limited English and different cultures. Voters in these communities are primarily older non-Hispanics who may be reluctant to increase their taxes to improve schools and other services needed by the newcomers.[18]

Hispanics in the nonmetropolitan United States are primarily Mexican (77 percent) and members of the Other Hispanics group (18 percent). In rural areas, Other Hispanics predominantly are third-generation and higher Americans. They occupy a lower socioeconomic status than urban Latinos. In general, rural Hispanics are likely to be recent immigrants, know little English, and be poor.[19]

Hispanics in nonmetropolitan areas and in the younger cities of the Sunbelt are less likely to live in well-established ethnic enclaves like those found in cities in the Northeast and Midwest.[20] This spatial dispersion may hasten their adoption of English and is likely to favor assimilation to the non-Hispanic majority.

While the Hispanic population remains concentrated in the metropolitan areas of a handful of states, economic change, along with the growing base population, is expanding Latinos' influence to a broader geographic range.

Growing Numbers

Next to its diversity, rapid growth is the most extraordinary aspect of the U.S. Hispanic population. In 1970, U.S. Hispanics numbered about 9 million, roughly 4 percent of the national population. By 1980, this group had grown 61 percent, to 14.6 million, increasing its population share to 6 percent. This rapid growth has continued into the 1990s. The number of Hispanics increased by 53 percent between 1980 and 1990, and another 27 percent between 1990 and 1996. The non-Hispanic population grew by 7 percent during the 1980s, and 4 percent between 1990 and 1996 (see Table 3, page 13). Hispanics made up 11 percent of the U.S. population in 1996.

This growth has important implications for the future U.S. and Hispanic populations. Some Hispanic ethnic groups are growing faster than others, changing the profile of the U.S. Hispanic population. In 1970, nearly 16 percent of all Hispanics were of Puerto Rican descent. In 1996, the Puerto Rican share was down to 11 percent. At the same time, the Mexican share rose from 50 percent to 63 percent, and the Central and South American-origin share rose from 8 percent to 14 percent.

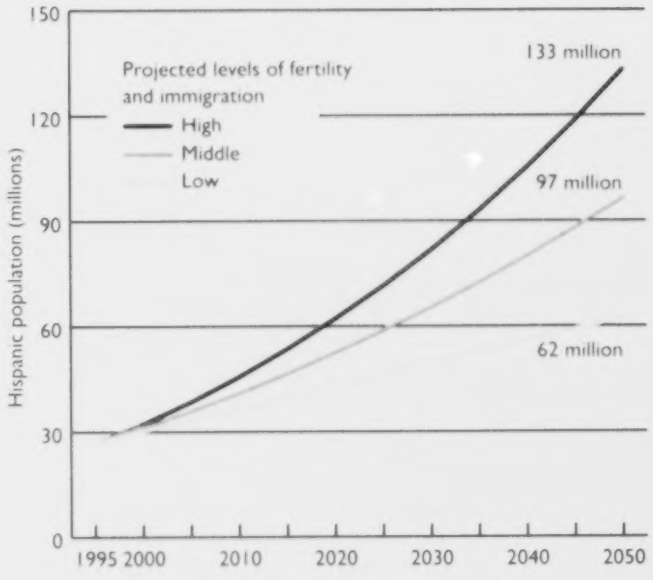
The Hispanic population is growing much faster than the rest of the U.S. population. Hispanics' share of the total population is projected to increase from about 11 percent in 1996 to 24 percent in 2050 (see Figure 4). Hispanics also are fueling an increasing share of the nation's population growth. Hispanics accounted for about 35 percent of the national population growth between 1980 and 1990, and they are projected to furnish more than one-half of the national population growth between 2020 and 2050.[7]

Future Population Growth

The Latino population is projected to reach 31 million by 2000, according to the Census Bureau. The number of Hispanics is projected to surpass 52 million in 2020, and reach 97 million by 2050, assuming moderate levels of fertility and immigration (see Figure 5).

Figure 5

Projected Growth of U.S. Hispanics, 1995-2050



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports P25-1130, tables 1 and 3.

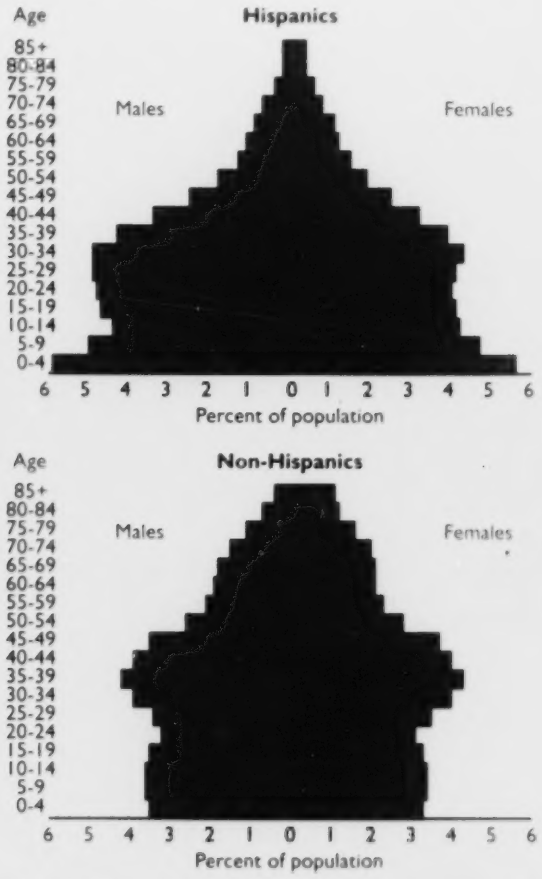
If immigration and fertility run at slightly higher levels, Hispanics will number 62 million in 2020 and 133 million in 2050. Under the lowest fertility and immigration levels projected by the Census Bureau, Latinos will number 43 million in 2020 and 62 million in 2050.[8]

As the U.S. population climbs from 265 million in 1996 to a projected 394 million in 2050, Hispanics will contribute an increasing proportion of population growth, more than any other racial or ethnic group. About 40 percent of the population growth between 1995 and 2050 will come from Hispanics, 30 percent from Asians, 20 percent from non-Hispanic whites, and 10 percent from non-Hispanic blacks.

Because their youthful age structure is combined with relatively high fertility and immigration rates,

Figure 6

Age and Sex Profile of U.S. Hispanics and Non-Hispanics, 1996



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census. Accessed on-line at http://www.census.gov/population/estimates/nation/e90s/e9696rmp.zip, on March 7, 1997.

Hispanics' population share will increase even faster among some population groups. Immigration tends to keep the age structure young, because young adults are the most likely to migrate. Many of the young immigrants form their own families and have children. The Hispanic child population is growing even faster than the total. Hispanic children are expected to outnumber black children by 1998, and to make up 31 percent of all children by 2050. Non-Hispanic whites, a projected 53 percent of the 2050 population, may make up 43 percent of children, while African Americans are expected to account for 16 percent.

In contrast, the non-Hispanic white population is increasing its share of the population ages 65 and older much faster than are Hispanics. The Census Bureau projects that the population 65 years and older will expand from 39 million in 2010 to 69 million in 2030, as the baby boom generation (born between 1946 and 1964) reaches retirement age. Much of this growth will be among whites. By 2050, non-Hispanic whites are projected to form two-thirds of the elderly (ages 65 and older), while Hispanics are likely to make up less than one-sixth of the elderly.

Sources of Growth

Most of the rapid growth of Hispanics in recent years has occurred because Hispanics have higher rates of fertility and immigration than non-Hispanics.

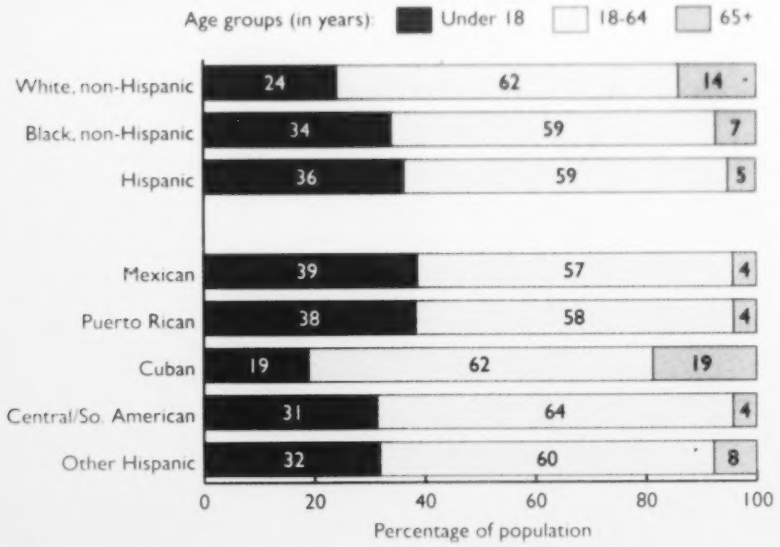
Some of the growth also reflects improved methods for enumerating the population. The Census Bureau has become much more successful at counting the undocumented immigrant population. And other Hispanic residents who were missed in the 1970 and 1980 censuses may have been counted for the first time in the 1990 census because of more advance publicity about the census and more thorough enumeration efforts.[23]

Ethnicity is self-reported, and individuals may not always report their ethnicity consistently, especially if the categories are unclear. The Census Bureau and other data-collecting organizations have refined their methods for collecting data on ethnicity, which has increased the Hispanic population count. In addition, a greater acceptability and awareness of Hispanic heritage in recent decades has encouraged more people to report themselves as Hispanic, even if they did not do so in the past.

Current trends in fertility and immigration suggest higher Hispanic growth in the coming decades.

Figure 7

U.S. Population by Age for Selected Racial and Ethnic Groups, 1996



Note: Percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding.
Source: Authors' calculations based on the March 1996 Current Population Survey.

Hispanics have higher fertility than any other major racial or ethnic group. And immigration, which produced at least one-third of the Hispanics' phenomenal growth over the past three decades, is expected to produce future increases until at least the middle of the next century. The Hispanics' young age structure also favors continued growth.

Age and Sex Structure

Compared with the total U.S. population, the Hispanic population is young, with proportionately more children and fewer elderly (see Figure 6). This youthful age structure reflects immigration flows, which consist mostly of young adults in their reproductive years, and higher fertility, particularly among the foreign-born. Each Hispanic group, however, has had different patterns and levels of immigration, and to a lesser extent, varied fertility and mortality rates.

The biggest difference between Latinos and non-Hispanic whites is in the proportion of children and elderly, and the smallest difference is in the proportion of working-age adults (ages 18 to 64). In 1996, more than one-third of Latinos were children under age 18, compared with nearly one-fourth of whites. Conversely, only 5 percent of Hispanics were elderly (65 years and older), compared with 14 percent of whites. About 59 percent of Latinos were in the working ages, compared with 62 percent of non-Hispanic whites. The age structure of African Americans is much closer to that of Latinos, with 34 percent children, 7 percent elderly, and 59 percent of working age.

Among Latino groups, the proportion of children ranges from 19 percent among Cubans to 39 percent among Mexicans, while the proportion of elderly ranges from 4 percent among Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Central and South Americans, to 19 percent among Cubans (see Figure 7).

The difference in age structure between Latinos and the rest of the population is more striking if we look at Latinos born in and outside the

Immigrant communities are an important source of information about jobs for relatives back home.

United States.[2] More than one-half (53 percent) of Latinos born in the United States were under age 18 in 1996, compared with only 13 percent of those born outside the United States. A large majority of immigrants come to the United States to join the labor force; 80 percent of those born outside the country were in the working ages, compared with 43 percent of U.S.-born Hispanics. The proportion elderly was 4 percent among Latinos born in the United States, and 7 percent among Latinos born elsewhere.

Another effect of immigration patterns is that the Hispanic population is more male than that of non-Hispanics. Some early immigration streams were male-dominated. Many men came north to work in fields and factories and then stayed on. Recent immigrant streams have included a greater proportion of young women, however. The Hispanic population has proportionately more males than females than the non-Hispanic population. In 1996, the sex ratio of the Mexican population was 107 (107 males per 100 females), compared with 96 for whites and 88 for African Americans. The sex ratio among Mexicans born outside the United States, for example, was 122, compared with about 99 for Mexicans born outside the country.

The sex ratio also reflects the youthfulness of a population. Men have higher mortality than women in the older ages, and younger populations tend to have a greater proportion of males.

Immigration

The United States is often called a nation of immigrants because it was founded and settled by persons born elsewhere. But few Mexicans or other Latinos immigrated to the United States before the 1900s. During the 19th and early 20th centuries, the U.S. Hispanic population expanded little beyond the scattered settlements in the American Southwest.[3] Only 178 immigrants from Latin America were recorded in 1820, the first year immigration statistics were kept. More than 8,000 people entered from other countries that year, primarily from Europe. Land arrivals were not completely enumerated until 1908 and official records underestimate the total flow across the largely unregulated U.S.-Mexico border in that period—or into U.S. states along the Caribbean. The statistics show only 750,000 immigrants from Mexico, the Caribbean, and other parts of Latin America between 1820 and 1920. These early Hispanics—about half of whom were from the Caribbean—contributed only about 2 percent of the 34 million immigrants who settled in the United States in that period. Most U.S. immigrants were from Ireland, the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, and other European countries.

After a hiatus during the Great Depression of the 1930s and World War II, immigration to the United States increased again in the second half of the century. The national origins of U.S. immigrants changed dramatically after World War II. For the first time, persons from Latin American countries made up a significant share of the newcomers. Between 1951 and 1960, the 560,000 immigrants from Latin America admitted to the United States made up 22 percent of the total for that period. The flow from Latin America accelerated in the 1970s and 1980s. A greater proportion of immigrants came from Central and South America (see Figure 8). In the 1980s, 3.5 million Latin Americans were admitted as immigrants, nearly one-half (47 percent) of the total.

The increase in Latin American immigration reflects changing economic and political situations both here and abroad. During the United States's first 100 years, no limits were imposed on the size and national composition of immigrants. With the Immigration Act of 1875, the U.S. government enacted laws to restrict who and how many people could move to the United States. Immigra-

tion from Asia, for example, was curbed by legislation that prevented Chinese and Japanese workers from entering the United States.

Until 1965, however, immigration from Western Hemisphere countries had no numerical restrictions. Legislation enacted in 1965 put a ceiling on the number of people who could enter from Latin American countries. The new laws also pried open the door for immigration from Asia. The most recent annual cap for immigrants from all countries (675,000) was set by the Immigration Act of 1990. A per-country limit is established annually, but no country can send more than 7 percent of all immigrants.

Immediate family members of U.S. residents are exempt from the annual cap and can qualify under special provisions designed to reunite families. Refugees and asylum-seekers also are exempt from the annual cap. The president sets the number of refugee visas each year, after consulting with Congress. The number of refugees can surge or wane annually depending on political events abroad.

Economic conditions in the sending countries have been the primary factor attracting Latin Americans to the United States. The pull of U.S. jobs, combined with the push of lagging economies and underemployment at home, created new streams of immigrants. Civil wars and repressive political regimes also have played an important role in the immigration of Latin Americans. Major political events brought waves of immigrants from Mexico in the 1920s and 1930s, from Cuba in the 1960s and 1980s, and from El Salvador and Guatemala in the 1970s and 1980s.

Social and family networks also encouraged post-World War II immigration from Latin America. The large communities of Mexican Americans—both native and foreign-born—have served as a network that attracts more immigrants and perpetuates the migration stream. As political and economic factors, and faster and cheaper transportation attracted immigrants from countries all over Latin America, communities of Cubans, Dominicans, Colombians, Salvadorans, and other Latin Americans were created within U.S. cities.

Figure 8

Leading Countries of Origin of Hispanic Immigrants, 1980s and 1990s

Source: Immigration and Naturalization Service Yearbooks (various years).

Immigrant communities are an important source of information about jobs for relatives back home, and they provide invaluable help to new immigrants who want to settle here, whether they are from China, Germany, Italy, Mexico, or any other country. U.S. immigration law adds to the effect of networks on further immigration through family preference provisions. These provisions allow U.S. residents to sponsor the immigration of other family members, although obtaining a visa for family members can be a lengthy process.

Networks also facilitate a large population of immigrants living here illegally. The population of undocumented immigrants from Mexico and other Latin American countries grew

Table 4

Leading Countries of Origin of Undocumented U.S. Migrants, October 1996

Country of origin	Number (thousands)	Percent
Total undocumented	5,000	100.0
Mexico	2,700	54.0
El Salvador	335	6.7
Guatemala	165	3.3
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Honduras	90	1.8
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Nicaragua	70	1.4
Colombia	65	1.3
Ecuador	55	1.1
Dominican Republic	50	1.0
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]

Source: INS, 1995 Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 183, table P.

rapidly in the 1970s and 1980s, although the magnitude is not known.

Public concern about the negative effects of immigration, and the seemingly uncontrolled illegal immigration, prompted passage of a landmark law, the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA). Under IRCA, undocumented foreigners who had lived in the United States prior to 1982 could apply for legal status under special amnesty provisions in the legislation. More than 3 million applications for legalization were filed between 1987 and 1988. Almost nine of every 10 applicants (2.7 million) were Latinos, and three of every four (2.3 million) were from Mexico.[7] As of 1996, nearly 2.7 million IRCA legalizations were approved, of which nearly 2.5 million appear as new admissions in immigration statistics between 1989 and 1991. About 59 percent (1.6 million) of the immigrants gained legal residency under the amnesty provision. Another 41 percent (1.1 million) were admitted under the Special Agricultural Worker (SAW) provisions that granted legal status to undocumented migrants who had worked in agriculture at least 90 days.[8]

But IRCA appears not to have slowed illegal immigration to the United States. Excluding those who applied for legalization under IRCA, the INS estimated there were about 2.8 million undocumented immigrants in 1988, just after the close of the amnesty application period. The estimate was raised to 3.9 million in 1992. The INS estimated an average annual growth of 275,000 per year between 1992 and 1996, yielding an estimated total of 5 million undocumented migrants in October 1996.

Mexico was the source for more than one-half of the unauthorized migrants. The INS estimated that there were about 2.7 million Mexicans living in the United States illegally in 1996 (see Table 4). In September 1997, the Mexico-United States Binational Commission estimated a similar figure—about 2.4 million undocumented Mexicans residing in the United States during roughly the same period.

About 60 percent of all undocumented migrants come from clandestine border crossings; the other 40 percent involve people who are here legally but overstay or otherwise violate the terms of their visas.[9] These numbers suggest the undocumented resident stock is approaching, or has reached, the peak period of undocumented levels in the mid-1980s, just prior to the legalization of nearly 3 million through the provisions of IRCA (see Box 3, page 22).

The illegal population is clustered in the states with the largest Hispanic populations. This clustering underscores the important role of networks in directing the flow of illegal and legal immigration. More than 2 million undocumented immigrants, or 40 percent of the total, lived in California in 1996. Another 43 percent lived in the states of Texas, New York, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, and Arizona. INS estimates of the undocumented population refer

exclusively to persons who have established permanent residence (those who have remained in the country for more than 12 months in an illegal status). They do not include persons who may be present for short periods, such as seasonal workers who cross the border to work a few months, tourists who overstay their visas, or commuters who cross the border daily for work. Many foreigners here illegally do not live here permanently. Mexican nationals, for example, often journey north to work for a few months or years, then return to their families and home communities. While these individuals may not add to the permanent population, they do affect the profiles of U.S. Hispanic communities.

A major study of undocumented migration from Mexico, the Mexican Migration Project (MMP), chronicles the lifetime migration history of individuals from communities in western Mexico and has shown that many people make multiple trips to the United States, but many return to their home communities. Demographers Douglas Massey and Audrey Singer, for example, used the MMP to demonstrate the degree to which undocumented Mexican migration is circular. They estimated 36.5 million undocumented entries from Mexico to the United States between 1965 and 1989. The vast majority of these entries (86 percent) were offset by the departure of these immigrants back to Mexico. Massey and Singer estimated a net gain of 5.2 million Mexicans during the period, after adjusting for returns to Mexico.[7] During the 25 years of this study, the highest levels of adjusted net migration to the United States were seen in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and at no time did the ratio of stayers-to-returnees surpass 50 percent. In most years, especially in the 1980s, the net effect of the circularity between the two countries fell heavily to the Mexican side of the border, and in some years more undocumented migrants left the United States than had entered in that year.

Return or circular migration is neither purely an undocumented nor a Mexican phenomenon. Levels of circular migration also tend to be high among immigrants from countries geographically close to the United States, such as the Dominican Republic.[8]

Mexico

Mexico has been the leading source country for Latin American immigrants since 1820. Mexico emerged as a major sending country early in the 20th century, especially after the waves of European immigrants subsided. Nearly 5.4 million Mexicans immigrated to the United States between 1820 and 1995. Only Germany (7.1 million), and Ireland (5.4 million) sent more immigrants during that 176-year period. Mexico ranked fourth among sending nations between 1921 and 1940, third between 1941 and 1960, and first after 1960. In 1995, more than 90,000 immigrants were admitted from Mexico, about 40,000 more than the Philippines, the second-ranked country of origin for U.S. immigrants.[9]

Immigration to the United States from Mexico began in earnest during the decades surrounding the Mexican Revolution, which began in 1910. Although official immigration records are incomplete, historical accounts indicate that migration of Mexican citizens to the United States began to accelerate in 1897.[10] Official records show nearly 50,000 Mexicans entering the United States between 1901 and 1910, 220,000 between 1911 and 1920, and nearly one-half million between 1921 and 1930. Temporary workers entered the country from Mexico during that period as well.

A marked drop in Mexican immigration occurred during the Depression years, as did immigration from all geographic areas. In the 1940s, Mexican workers began to stream into the United States under the Bracero Program. This program, launched in 1942, was a binational agreement that allowed the entry of temporary

Mexico has been the leading source country for Latin American immigrants since 1820.

Box 3

IRCA and the Legalization of Latin American Immigrants

The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA) was landmark legislation in U.S. immigration policy. One of its primary aims was to thwart illegal migration into the United States. The law provided for sanctions against employers that knowingly hire unauthorized workers, for increased border enforcement, and for the legalization of people who had lived here illegally for many years.[1]

An undocumented foreigner could qualify for legalization (popularly known as amnesty) in two ways: (1) by demonstrating at least five years of continuous residence in the United States before Jan. 1, 1982 (pre-1982 provision); or (2) through the Special Agricultural Workers provision (SAW provision). About 1.6 million unauthorized residents qualified through the pre-1982 provision and 1.1 million qualified through the SAW provision.

The majority of applicants under both provisions were from Latin American and Caribbean countries (92 percent). Three-quarters of all applicants were Mexican nationals. The next largest single nationality was from El Salvador, nearly 6 percent of all applicants. Another 2 percent were from Guatemala. Most legalization applicants lived in California (53 percent) or Texas (15 percent). Nearly 20 percent lived in New York, Illinois, Florida, or Arizona.

Surveys of all the people over age 18 who had legalized their status under IRCA found that, by 1992, most were in their early 30s and had resided in the United States an average of 11 years. More than half of those surveyed were men (56 percent). Sixty-nine percent were Mexican, 15 percent were from Central America, and 16 percent were from all other countries combined. The majority of those surveyed spoke

agricultural workers until 1964.[2] By the end of the program, 5 million Mexican workers, called *braceros*, had worked on U.S. farms.[3]

The Bracero Program touched off a flow of permanent migration that produced an influx of nearly 300,000 legal permanent residents from Mexico in the 1950s. That number grew to more than 450,000 during the 1960s, 640,000 during the 1970s, and more than 1.6 million during the 1980s.

About two-thirds of the increase in the number of immigrants from Mexico during the 1980s is attributed to IRCA. Another 950,000 Mexicans were admitted in 1991, although the majority of these immigrants were admitted under the IRCA amnesty program, which meant they had lived in the United States illegally for nine or more years. About one-half of the IRCA adjustees had arrived in the United States before 1979.[4]

Mexico also is the leading source of undocumented immigrants to the United States. In 1996, the INS estimated that more than 2.7 million Mexicans living in the United States either had entered the country legally and overstayed their visas, or had slipped across the border surreptitiously.[5]

Immigration reforms enacted after IRCA have tried to slow the flow of undocumented migrants by strengthening border control and increasing the penalties for breaking immigration laws, among other actions. The U.S. concern about illegal immigration from Mexico also is an important factor in the relations between the two countries. One of the arguments in favor of passing the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with Canada and Mexico was that it would create more jobs in Mexico and ultimately slow illegal immigration to the United States.

Spanish. Nearly one-fourth reported they still could not speak English five years after legalization.[2]

The majority (75 percent) entered the United States without documents. The remaining 25 percent entered legally with valid temporary nonimmigrant visas but subsequently violated the terms of their visas by either staying past the authorized dates or by working illegally.

Undocumented workers commonly enter the labor market through low-wage jobs in restaurants, construction, private household service, agriculture, and apparel production. About 50 percent of the people legalized through IRCA held their first U.S. job in one of these five industries. Five years after legalization, 30 percent still worked in one of these industries, more than twice the percentage for all U.S. workers.[3]

IRCA's legalization recipients appear in INS statistics in the year they adjusted to legal permanent residence. The number of IRCA adjustments reached a high of 1.1 million in fiscal year 1991 and then declined to 163,342 in 1992 and to only 24,278 in 1993.

References

1. U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of International Labor Affairs, "Effects of the Immigration Reform and Control Act: Characteristics and Labor Market Behavior of the Legalized Population Five Years Following Legalization" (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor, 1996).
2. U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, "Immigration Reform and Control Act: Report on the Legalized Alien Population" (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, 1992).
3. See Jacqueline Maria Hagan, *Deciding to Be Legal: A Maya Community in Houston* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994).

Despite NAFTA, IRCA, and more recent immigration legislation, the flow of unauthorized migrants from Mexico to the United States continues at high levels.[1] It is probably too soon to assess the long-term effects of NAFTA and immigration controls. However, the large network of Mexicans already in the United States and the long border between the two countries make it virtually impossible to stop the illegal flow altogether. Whatever happens to the flow of undocumented migrants from Mexico, thousands of Mexicans are likely to settle here legally every year under current laws.

Cuba

Immigration from Cuba has been dramatically affected by the internal politics of that country. Few Cubans settled in the United States prior to Fidel Castro's rise to power in 1959. Statistics for Cuban immigrants were combined with those from other Caribbean nations until 1925. About 16,000 Cubans immigrated between 1925 and 1930, and less than 10,000 came during the economically depressed 1930s. The figure grew to 26,000 in the 1940s, and jumped to nearly 79,000 during the 1950s as the political situation in Cuba became unstable.

The first large wave of refugees fled Cuba in 1959, and thousands more followed. Between 1965 and 1974, the Cuban exodus was jointly organized by the United States and Cuba, with an air bridge called *Vuelos de la Libertad*, or Freedom Flights.[2] The number of refugees and immigrants reached 209,000 during the 1960s and 265,000 in the 1970s.

Since 1925, more than 813,000 Cubans have been admitted to the United States. The majority came as political refugees and later were

Cuba has been the major source of political refugees from this hemisphere.

adjusted to permanent resident status.[9] Cuba has been the major source of political refugees from this hemisphere, contributing more than 92 percent of the 597,000 refugees and asylees from the Americas who were granted permanent residency status between 1946 and 1995.[10] The majority of Cuban immigrants entered the United States before 1982; about 30 percent before 1965, and 58 percent between 1965 and 1981.

A new wave of Cubans came in 1980, when more than 125,000 Cubans arrived in Miami from Cuba's Mariel Harbor. This mass departure contributed 86 percent of that decade's Cuban immigrants. The Mariel influx created considerable social disruption in southern Florida, and since that time U.S. policy toward Cuban refugees has attempted to strike a balance between offering asylum to people escaping political repression and avoiding the social and economic consequences of a large influx of refugees.

Economic conditions worsened in the 1990s, especially after the demise of the former Soviet Union cost Cuba vital foreign assistance and trade. Desperate economic conditions encouraged a new type of refugee—individuals who sneaked out of Cuba and sailed toward the United States in makeshift vessels, called *balsas*. The *balsas* were sometimes just flimsy rafts constructed from tires tied together. The U.S. Coast Guard picked up many of the refugees, or *balseros*, before they completed the 90-mile voyage to Florida. The *balseros*' status was in limbo as the U.S. government attempted to craft a reasonable policy to deal with these new circumstances.

The situation reached a crisis in 1994, when Cuba's president Fidel Castro allowed thousands of *balseros* to leave the country. The U.S. Coast Guard apprehended the refugees and held them on the U.S. Naval Station at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. While many of these refugees eventually were brought to the United States, current U.S. policy is to return them to Cuba.[11]

Dominican Republic

The Dominican Republic is the other major source of Hispanic immigrants from the Caribbean, though few Dominicans came here before 1970. Emigration from the Dominican Republic was severely restricted during the dictatorship of General Rafael L. Trujillo, which lasted from 1930 to 1961. After Trujillo left power, the country entered a period of political turmoil, when its government changed hands many times, often violently.

The U.S. government sent military troops to the island in the 1960s to restore order and initiated migration flows to the United States to diffuse political mobilization and improve relations between the two countries.[12]

Declining economic conditions in the Dominican Republic provided more incentive for immigration to the United States. More than 240,000 Dominicans were admitted during the 1960s and 1970s. The flow has accelerated, swelling to 252,000 during the 1980s and 219,000 between 1991 and 1995. The Dominican Republic, a country of only 8 million inhabitants, was the fourth largest source of U.S. immigrants in 1995, after Mexico, the Philippines, and China. In addition, an estimated 50,000 unauthorized Dominicans were living in the United States in 1996.[13]

Central America

An acute shortage of farm land, extreme economic inequality, widespread poverty, and dismal public health conditions—combined with civil wars, political repression, and crumbling economies—made Central America ripe for a large exodus of migrants. More than 1 million immigrants from Central America were admitted between 1820 and 1995, but more than two-thirds of them entered after 1980.

The first wave of Central American immigrants arrived during the 1960s, when more than 100,000 were

admitted to the United States. Another 135,000 entered during the 1970s, followed by almost 470,000 during the 1980s. Many who came after 1980 were fleeing the political, economic, and military crises occurring simultaneously in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua.

El Salvador is the leading source of both legal and illegal immigration from Central America. More than 340,000 immigrants came from El Salvador between 1981 and 1995. An estimated 335,000 undocumented Salvadorans lived in the United States in 1996. Many of the illegal immigrants sought political asylum, but few received it.[11]

Guatemala contributed 134,000 immigrants admitted between 1985 and 1995, and ranks just after El Salvador. Nicaragua and Honduras are the other major sending nations.[12]

South America

More than 1.5 million South Americans were admitted from 1820 to 1995, and about 49 percent of them entered after 1980. The first large surge of South American immigrants came during the 1960s, when about 258,000 were admitted. During the 1970s another 296,000 entered and were followed by almost 462,000 during the 1980s. However, only about 75 percent of the South Americans came from Spanish-speaking countries, while the balance were from Guyana and Brazil. Between 1985 and 1995, more than 440,000 South Americans (excluding Guyanese and Brazilians) were admitted. Colombia sent the most immigrants of any country in South America—more than 361,000 since 1932. More than 192,000 Ecuadorians and 147,000 Argentineans gained admission from 1932 to 1995.

The illegal immigration flow is much slower from South America than other Latin American countries. The INS estimated that 65,000 Colombians, 55,000 Ecuadorians, and 30,000 Peruvians were living illegally in the United States in 1996.

Future Immigration from Latin America

The projections of future population growth among U.S. Hispanics, and for the country as a whole, hinge on assumptions about future levels of immigration. Some immigration from Latin America has been associated with political and economic crises, which are impossible to predict. New laws, improved economic outlooks in the sending countries, and other factors will affect the size of the flow northward. However, the immigration waves of the 1970s and 1980s expanded the networks of Latin Americans which will, even without strong economic incentives, attract additional immigrants. The flow of immigrants is likely to continue. The most recent Census Bureau projections assume that Hispanic immigration (both legal and illegal) will range from 148,000 to 558,000 annually until 2050. The middle series projection scenario pegs annual immigration of Hispanics at 350,000.

If immigration does level off or decline, the foreign-born share of the Latino population will fall. Links between Latino communities and their Latin American roots will be strengthened by the entry of new immigrants, but the newcomers will provide a shrinking share of U.S. and Latino population growth.

Fertility

Although international migration is a large contributor to the growth and diversity of the Hispanic population in the United States, births to Hispanics contributed nearly two-thirds of the increase in the Hispanic population during 1995.[13]

Fewer Hispanic births would occur in the absence of immigration. Not only does immigration bring in more women of reproductive age, but foreign-born Hispanic women tend to have substantially higher fertility than U.S.-born Hispanic women. Yet, even if immigration had ceased after 1995, the number of U.S. Hispanics would

Births to Hispanics contributed nearly two-thirds of the increase in the Hispanic population during 1995.

Table 5

U.S. Fertility by Hispanic Origin and Race, 1979, 1990, and 1995

Race/ethnic group	Birth rate (births/1,000 population)			Fertility rate (births/1,000 women ages 15-44)			TFR (Total fertility rate)*	
	1979	1990	1995	1979	1990	1995	1990	1995
Total U.S.	15.6	16.7	14.8	66.7	71.0	65.6	2.1	2.0
Hispanic	25.5	26.7	25.2	100.5	107.7	105.0	3.0	3.0
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Non-Hispanic	14.7	15.7	13.7	63.2	67.1	60.8	2.0	1.9
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]

— Not available.

Note: The 1979 figures are based on data from Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, New Jersey, New York, and Ohio. The 1990 figures are based on 50 states. The 1995 figures are based on data from all states and the District of Columbia.

* The TFR is an estimate of the total number of births a woman would have given current age-specific birth rates. TFRs are not available for 1979.

Source: C. Davis, et al. *Population Bulletin* 38, no. 3 (1983): 15; NCHS, *Monthly Vital Statistics Report* 41, no. 5 (Supplement, 25 Jan. 1993): 40, table 24; NCHS, *Monthly Vital Statistics Report* 45, no. 11 (Supplement, 10 June 1997): 38, table 11.

likely rise to 59 million by 2050, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Estimates of Hispanic fertility prior to the mid-1980s were based on scanty data. Systematic collection of Hispanic origin on birth certificates did not begin until 1978. Only 19 states reported Hispanic origin in 1979, and many records were incomplete or inaccurate. Estimates of the size and age profile of the Hispanic population—the denominators for fertility rates—were also less sound.

The Hispanic birth rate in 1979 was about 73 percent higher than the non-Hispanic birth rate, based on National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) data for nine states. These states contained about 90 percent of the Hispanic population, although Texas and New Mexico were not included. Some of this difference reflected Hispanics' younger age profile—more Hispanics were in their childbearing years. The fertility rate (births per 1,000 women ages 15 to 44), which is less affected by age structure because it is based on the number of women of childbearing age, was about 59 percent higher for Hispanics than for non-Hispanics in 1979. Among Hispanic groups, fertility was highest for Mexican Americans and lowest for Cubans (see Table 5). Cuban women also had lower fertility than non-Hispanic women, reflecting an older age structure and possibly lower birth expectations among these more-affluent and better-educated Hispanic women.

By the early 1980s, the size of the Hispanic population was more certain, and birth registration by Hispanic origin was much more complete. The recorded rates showed that the fertility of Hispanic women, and of Mexican women in particular, continued to be among the highest of any major racial or ethnic group in the United States.

Hispanic birth and fertility rates calculated by NCHS for 1990 and 1995 are similar to those calculated for 1979. Hispanic fertility is still much higher than that of other racial and ethnic groups. The total fertility rate (TFR)—a hypothetical measure of the total number of births women would have given current birth rates—was three children per woman for Hispanics and was below two for all non-Hispanics. A TFR of two, more precisely, 2.1 children per woman, is required for a generation to replace itself, after allowing for deaths. The TFRs for most Hispanic

groups were well above the replacement level. In 1995, the TFR ranged from 3.3 for Mexicans to 1.7 for Cubans. Cubans were the only major Hispanic group with below-replacement level fertility.[47]

Why is Hispanic fertility higher than that of non-Hispanics? On average, Hispanics have less education, lower family incomes, and higher poverty rates than non-Hispanics. All of these characteristics tend to be associated with higher fertility in the United States.

Education is a key variable because it is closely related to income and poverty. In every ethnic and racial group, fertility tends to be lower as education levels increase. Among women with less than nine years of education, the TFRs were above 4.0 children per woman for black and Hispanic women and about 4.9 children among white women in 1994 (see Figure 9, page 28).[48] Women with exactly 12 years of school had TFRs ranging from 3.8 for Hispanics to 2.4 for whites. The differences were much smaller among college-educated women.

The increasing number of foreign-born Latinos also helps keep fertility high among Hispanics. Immigrant women tend to be concentrated in the prime childbearing years, and they have higher birth rates than native-born women. Their higher fertility is partially explained by their preference for larger families and by their lower educational levels.

Many immigrant women maintain the higher fertility norms of their home countries.[49] Although their childbearing is often disrupted during the move to this country, many have additional children once they are established. Many Latin American immigrants come from rural areas or small communities where fertility is even higher than the national averages. Women living in rural Mexico had about 3.8 children, on average, in 1994, compared with 2.6 children among urban women in Mexico.[50]

After several years in the United States, immigrants' fertility norms begin to reflect the smaller family size norms in U.S. society. But, on average, foreign-born women, especially from Latin America, have higher fertility rates than native-born women. U.S. figures for 1994 show that women born in Mexico had the highest fertility rate of any major immigrant group—147 births per 1,000 women ages 15 to 44. Women born elsewhere in Latin America had a fertility rate of 82. In contrast, women born in Europe had 53 births per 1,000, women born in Asia had 58 births per 1,000, and women born in the United States had 62 births per 1,000.[51]

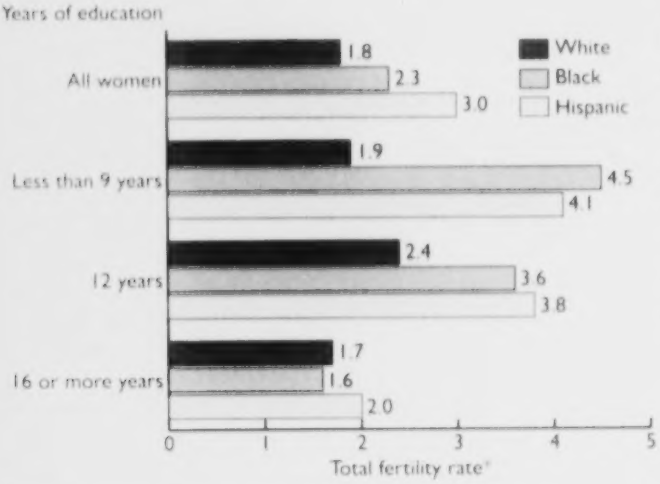
The higher fertility rates among Latin American immigrants is one reason for the high fertility rates among U.S. Hispanics. The effect of foreign-born Hispanic women on the birth rate is dramatic in states with large Hispanic immigrant populations. The Hispanic share of all births in California, for example, more than doubled between 1975 and 1995—from 20 percent to 46 percent—in part because of the fourfold growth in the number of Hispanic women of childbearing age in California during that period. Women born in Mexico contributed 27 percent of all California births in 1992, compared with only 7 percent in 1970. More babies were born to Hispanic women of all origins than to white women in California, even though there were twice as many non-Hispanic whites of childbearing age. In 1992, women born in Mexico accounted for 61 percent of Hispanic women giving birth in California.[52]

Whether Hispanic fertility converges with the U.S. national average may depend on the level of legal and unauthorized immigration and the extent to which Hispanic women increase their education. Hispanic fertility remains substantially above replacement level and will probably remain there for the foreseeable future. The Census Bureau projections assume that the TFR for Hispanic women will fall as low as 2.5 or rise as high as 3.4 by 2010, and remain constant until 2050. The middle range projection series shows Hispanic

The increasing number of foreign-born Latinos also helps keep fertility high among Hispanics.

Figure 9

Fertility by Race/Ethnicity and Mother's Education, 1994



* The total fertility rate measures the lifetime births per woman given current age-specific birth rates.

Source: T.J. Matthews and S.J. Ventura, Monthly Vital Statistics Reports 45, no. 10 S (April 1997): 4.

fertility constant at 3.0 children per woman between 1995 and 2050.[13]

Intermarriage

While the continued flow of immigrants will help keep Hispanic (and therefore, national) fertility levels above replacement, the Hispanic population also will be affected by the fact that some Hispanics will marry and have children with people of other racial and ethnic groups. The children of these unions may or may not be identified and counted as Hispanics.

Most Latinos marry within their own national origin group, but they are more likely to marry a non-Latino than someone from another Latino group (see Figure 10). Latino women are more likely to marry outside their ethnic group than Latino men. One-sixth (18 percent) of Hispanic wives were married to a non-Hispanic husband in 1996. One-seventh of the Hispanic married men had a non-Hispanic wife.

Mexican men and women were most likely to marry another Mexican, while those in the Other Hispanics group were least likely to have a spouse from the same group. Other Hispanics were most likely to marry a non-Hispanic (34 percent of women and 32 percent of men).

The level of exogamy, or intermarriage between members of a group and people outside the group, is one measure of the group's assimilation. Blacks rarely marry non-blacks, for example, although they do so much more often in the 1990s than in previous decades. In 1996, about 3 percent of blacks were married to whites, Asians, or others.

Two features of the intermarriage of Hispanics are important to their place in U.S. society. First, they are much more likely than African Americans to marry outside their race/ethnic group, suggesting that Hispanics are more assimilated into U.S. mainstream society than African Americans. Second, Hispanics are more likely to marry a non-Hispanic than someone from another Latino group. This underscores the distinct identity of each Hispanic ethnic group.[14]

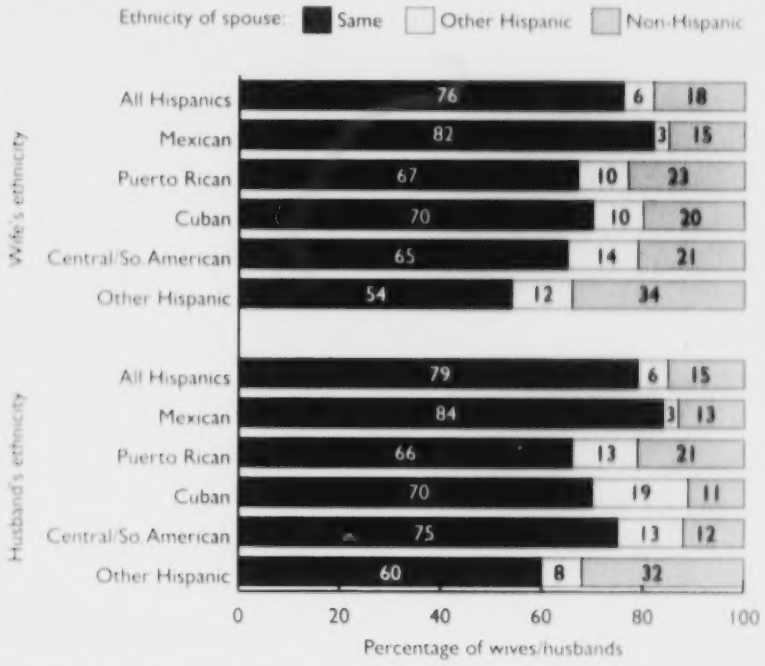
Hispanics in U.S. Society

The demographic characteristics of the Hispanic population have been shaped by fertility, mortality, and migration. The demography of Hispanics also explains some of their other characteristics—because they are younger, Hispanics are more likely than non-Hispanics to be part of a family with young children; because so many are immigrants, they have had less opportunity to complete an education or secure a high-paying job.

But Hispanics' place in U.S. society reflects more fundamental cultural aspects of the countries of origin, the attitudes of non-Hispanics toward Hispanics, and the effects of minority status on the well-being of this population group.

Figure 10

Hispanic Ethnicity of Wives and Husbands, 1996



Source: Authors' calculations based on the March 1996 Current Population Survey

Family Life

Hispanics from many ethnic backgrounds tend to be more family-oriented than other Americans. Latino culture traditionally values maintaining good relationships with family members, caring for infirm relatives, and placing family needs above individual needs.[7] But the shifts in social norms, combined with economic changes during the past few decades, have fundamentally changed the family among all racial and ethnic groups. Men and women marry later, couples are more likely to divorce, women are more likely to work outside the home, and young children are less likely to be under the exclusive care of their parents.

Marriage

Hispanics followed the move toward later marriage and more divorce that was evident throughout U.S. society in the past quarter century. These patterns are affected by age structure, which differs among racial and ethnic groups, but the general trends were fairly similar among Hispanics and other Americans. In 1970, 72 percent of Hispanics ages 18 years and older were married, almost the same as the figure for all whites (which included Hispanics). About 64 percent of African Americans were married. But marriage declined among all three groups over the ensuing decades. By 1995, the percentage of those ages 18 and older who were currently married was down to 59 percent for Hispanics, 63 percent for whites, and 43 percent for African Americans.

Americans in the largest ethnic groups are waiting longer before marrying, or are choosing not to marry. The percentage of Hispanic adults who had never married grew from 19 percent to 29 percent

Hispanic fertility remains substantially above replacement level and will probably remain there for the foreseeable future.

between 1970 and 1995, while the percentage of whites remaining single rose from 16 percent to 21 percent. The delay or avoidance of marriage was most pronounced among African Americans—the percentage who had not married rose from 21 percent to 38 percent over the same period.

Divorce also became more prevalent throughout American society. Between 1970 and 1995, the percentage of persons ages 18 or older who were divorced rose from 4 percent to 8 percent for Hispanics, from 4 percent to 11 percent for all blacks, and from 3 percent to 9 percent for all whites.[7]

Hispanic Households

Latinos' traditional focus on the family is borne out in the types of households in which U.S. Hispanics live. Hispanic households are more likely to be composed of family members (persons related by blood, marriage, or adoption) than are non-Hispanic households. In 1996, 79 percent of Latino households were composed of families, compared with less than 70 percent of white and black households.[8] However, Latino family households are less likely than white family households to be the traditional two-parent family, and more likely to be headed by single women with no spouse present (see Table 6).

About three-fourths of the households in each Hispanic ethnic group are made up of families. The percentages ranged from 84 percent of Mexican households to 73 percent of households of Other Hispanics. The share of family households headed by a married couple in 1996 ranged from about one-half among Puerto Rican families to three-fourths among Cuban families. The percentage of families maintained by women ranged from 19 percent among Cuban families to 42 percent among Puerto Rican families.

Regardless of the type of family, Hispanic families are more likely to have children than non-Hispanic families—a pattern that has been observed since 1970.[9] The share of Hispanic children living with two parents has declined since 1970, consistent with national trends. The percentage of Hispanic children living with both parents fell from 78 percent in 1970 to 63 percent between 1970 and 1995. During the same period, the percentage of children living with both parents slipped from nearly 90 percent to 76 percent among whites, and from 59 percent to 33 percent among African American children.[10]

The growing percentage of single-parent families among Hispanics, as among other ethnic groups, means that fewer children have the benefit of living with both parents. This trend may have negative implications for educational attainment among Hispanic children.

Education: Falling Behind?

Education is one of the most important indicators of social status and economic well-being. Americans without at least a high school education have limited job opportunities and few chances for advancement. Their children face a greater risk than other children of dropping out of school, becoming a teen parent, and experiencing difficulties in the job

market. Education will be even more vital for securing a good job in the 21st century, and more jobs will require at least a college education.

Latinos have the lowest rates of high school and college graduation of any major population group. In 1996, little more than one-half (53 percent) of Hispanics ages 25 or older had completed high school, and less than 10 percent had at least a bachelor's degree (see Table 7, page 32). Nearly 85 percent of non-Hispanic adults were high school graduates, and nearly 25 percent were college graduates. While the educational attainment for African Americans fell below this average, it was well above that of Hispanics.

Latinos made significant strides in educational attainment during the 1970s, when about one-third finished high school and 5 percent completed at least four years of college. But they have seen little gain since 1980. In contrast, non-Hispanics have enjoyed significant gains in educational attainment since 1970, when more than one-half graduated from high school and 11 percent finished college.[50] The most glaring difference in educational attainment is the proportion of persons with little formal schooling. Nearly one-third (30 percent) of Latinos had less than a ninth-grade education in 1996, compared with only about 5 percent of whites and 10 percent of blacks. One-tenth of Hispanic adults had less than a fifth-grade education.

Among Hispanic groups, Mexicans have the lowest educational attainment, while Cubans and Other Hispanics have the highest. More than one-third (36 percent) of Mexicans ages 25 or older had less than a ninth-grade education, compared with 18 percent of Other Hispanics and 19 percent of Cubans. Just less than one-half (47 percent) of Mexicans had completed high school in 1996, compared with about two-thirds of Other Hispanics and Cubans. Only about 7 percent of Mexicans had a bachelor's degree or higher, compared with about 19 percent of Cubans and 13 percent of Other Hispanics.

Table 6

Characteristics of U.S. Family Households by Race and Ethnicity, 1996

Race/ ethnic group	Family households (thousands)	Percent of family households		
		Married-couple families	Female-headed families	Male-headed families
Total population	69,597	77	18	5
Non-Hispanic	63,311	78	17	5
Hispanic	6,287	68	26	7

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding.
Non-Hispanic American Indian, Eskimo, Aleut, Asian, and Pacific Islander
(including Puerto Rican born in Puerto Rico) is outside the 50 states and the District of Columbia.
Source: Authors' calculations based on the March 1996 Current Population Survey

Widening Gap

Why is the education gap between Latinos and other groups so large and growing wider? One explanation is that Hispanics have not had the same educational opportunities as other groups. Generations of Mexican Americans in the Southwest, for example, attended segregated, low-quality schools and were not encouraged to excel.[51] Many analysts see evidence of the same low expectations for today's Latino students, who are overrepresented in lower-level, noncollege-track courses.

Students' school success is tied to the characteristics of their family, culture, school, and community.[52] These factors reinforce low achievement among many Hispanic students for many reasons. Many Hispanic parents have little formal education. Less-educated parents often are not effective in encouraging their children to succeed or in advocating for

Table 7

Educational Attainment by Race and Ethnicity: United States, 1996

Race/ethnic group	Number (thousands)	Highest level of education (percent)			
		Less than 5th grade	Less than 9th grade	H.S. graduate or higher	B.A./B.S. or higher
Total population, age 25+	168,323	2	8	82	24
Non-Hispanic	153,782	1	6	85	25
Hispanic	14,541	10	30	53	9

Source: Authors' calculations based on the March 1996 Current Population Survey.

them in the school system; they may not be able to afford summer camps, computers, and other advantages that can enrich a child's education outside school.

Hispanic children have less preschool experience than whites and blacks, which means they start elementary school with fewer social skills and often with lower language skills than other children. The gap in preschool attendance has widened over time. In 1975, 27 percent of Hispanic 3- and 4-year-olds were enrolled in school, compared with 31 percent of white children and 34 percent of black children in the same age group. By 1995, the percentage of Hispanic 3- and 4-year-olds in school had risen to 37 percent, but the proportion of white and black children in school had risen much higher, to 52 percent and 48 percent, respectively.[53]

Hispanic students often confront cultural and linguistic differences in school. Some education specialists see the conflict between Hispanic students' backgrounds and the culture promoted in school as the root of Hispanic underachievement. Traditionally, U.S. public schools encourage the assimilation of immigrant cultures, including the replacement of native languages with English. Some Latino scholars assert that this assimilation denigrates the culture and families of Hispanic students, and creates low self-esteem. Hispanic students then are stereotyped as noncompetitive, nonfuture-oriented, and family-centered (rather than individualistic)—characteristics that do not favor academic excellence.[54]

Another reason cited for the below-average academic performance of Hispanics is the growing share of immigrants in the population. Recent immigrant waves have included many people with little formal education. Many immigrants' education may be consistent with average levels of attainment found in their home

countries, but lower than the average for U.S.-born Hispanics.[65]

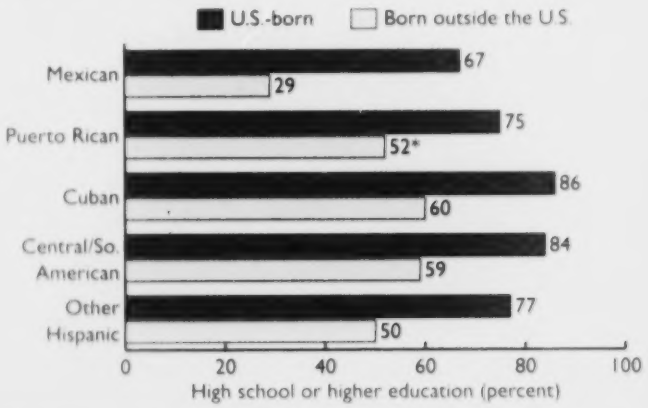
This argument appears to have some merit. About 70 percent of Latinos born in the United States had completed high school in 1996, compared with just 42 percent of those born abroad. In every national origin group, those born outside the United States were much less likely to have at least a high school education. The difference is greatest among Mexicans—67 percent of U.S.-born Mexicans had completed high school in 1996 compared with only 29 percent of those born outside the United States (see Figure 11). Similarly, more than one-half (54 percent) of foreign-born Mexicans had less than a ninth-grade education compared with 16 percent of those born here. Cubans and Central and South Americans born in the United States have high school completion rates similar to whites, at 86 percent and 85 percent, respectively, while only about 60 percent of their foreign-born counterparts had completed high school.

U.S.-born Hispanics also are more likely than other Hispanics to have completed at least four years of college—12 percent versus 8 percent in 1996—although the difference is smaller. This difference in college attendance was greatest among Cubans and Central and South Americans ages 25 or older—probably reflecting their very different immigrant streams. Nearly 28 percent of the U.S.-born Latinos from a Central or South American heritage had completed college, compared with about 12 percent of those born abroad. Similarly, 28 percent of U.S.-born Cubans had completed college, compared with 17 percent of foreign-born Cubans.

The first wave of Cuban refugees in the 1950s and 1960s included many highly educated professionals and business people, while the *Marielitos* who were allowed to emigrate in the 1980 Mariel boat lift, and the *balseros* who left Cuba in the 1990s, included many lower-educated, unemployed

Figure 11

Educational Attainment of U.S. Hispanic Ethnic Groups by Nativity, 1996



Note: Includes persons ages 25 or older.
* Includes Puerto Ricans born in Puerto Rico or outside the 50 states and the District of Columbia.
Source: Authors' calculations based on the March 1996 Current Population Survey.

Cubans. Many of the relatively few Central and South Americans entering the United States prior to 1970 came under employment-based immigration provisions, which generally required they have special skills and training. Most were from South America and many were college educated. The more recent streams originated in Central America and included a wider variety of people escaping depressed economies and political conflict.

Although U.S.-born Latinos complete more education than their foreign-born counterparts, they lag behind African Americans and whites at all educational levels. About 13 percent of U.S.-born Latinos had less than a ninth-grade education in 1996, compared with only 5 percent of whites and 9 percent of blacks.

The children of immigrants, second-generation Americans, appear to have better scholastic records, despite their parents' lower educational attainment and their limited English. In fact, second-generation Latinos in San Diego are outperforming Latino students with U.S.-born parents and foreign-born students, according to a study by sociologist

Although U.S.-born Latinos complete more education than their foreign-born counterparts, they lag behind African Americans and whites at all educational levels.

Ruben Rumbaut. One explanation for this seeming anomaly is that immigrants typically have a strong work ethic and an ability to set and achieve goals. When immigrants' children adopt similar values, they are likely to be more successful in school.[36]

The Next Generation

The average educational attainment of Hispanics lags behind that of other groups, yet many Latinos successfully pursue college and professional degrees of the highest level. In fact, Latinos who graduate from high school are about as likely as whites to go on to college—about 55 percent of those graduating from high school in 1994 enrolled in college the next fall.[37]

Getting more Latino students to graduate from high school may be the key to improving the educational attainment of the next generation. The vast majority of U.S. children ages 5 to 15 are in school, regardless of racial or ethnic group, but the enrollment gap widens at age 16 when students can leave school legally in most states. In 1995, about 88 percent of Latino 16- and 17-year-olds were enrolled, compared with 94 percent and 93 percent of whites and blacks, respectively. By ages 18 and 19, the proportion in school falls to 46 percent for Hispanics, compared with 62 percent for whites and 58 percent for blacks.

Hispanics have the highest dropout rates of any racial and ethnic group. The 174,000 Hispanic youths who dropped out of school in 1995 constituted 29 percent of high school dropouts that year.[38]

Yet there are signs of progress. The dropout rate for Hispanic 16- and 17-year-olds declined between 1980 and 1995, from 17 percent to 11 percent. The rate fell from 9 percent to 5 percent for white youths over the same period.

Studies showing that second-generation youths can excel in school are a positive sign. However, the evidence that achievement sags the longer students are in the country, and that third- and higher-generation students may not see the value of education, are warning signs that education systems around the country need to address the unique problems of this growing population.

Spanish Language

The Spanish language is a unifying characteristic of the Latino population. In the 1990 census, 15 million Hispanics ages 5 and older reported they speak a language other than English at home. This group constitutes nearly eight out of every 10 Hispanics ages 5 or older. Spanish is the second most common language spoken at home in the United States. French, the next most common language, runs a distant third. Less than 2 million people reported speaking French at home in the 1990 census.

Nearly two-fifths of all Hispanics reported that they did not speak English well or at all in 1990. Large enclaves of Spanish-speaking populations—for example, Mexicans in south Texas, Cubans in Miami, and Salvadorans in Los Angeles—make it possible for immigrants to keep house, work, and shop without speaking English. Spanish television

and radio shows provide entertainment and information. Bank Automated Teller Machine menus, driver's license forms, and school notices often appear in Spanish as well as English. The continuous stream of immigrants from Latin America constantly renews the pool of non-English speaking Latinos, and slows the learning of English.

However, recent studies show that Spanish-speakers want to learn English and feel it is important for their advancement. Further, Hispanic immigrants, and especially their children, do learn English—just as Italian, Polish, and German immigrants did, even though they also lived in ethnic communities where little English was spoken.

Traditionally, the first-generation Americans who arrive here as adults know little English, but their children learn English fluently at school or on the job. By the third generation, the native language often is lost altogether in favor of English. Studies show that the same progression is occurring among Hispanics.[37]

A limited command of English hinders the educational achievement of Hispanic children and limits their chance of success in the labor force. Students who begin school with poor English often are placed in special classes, which, some analysts maintain, relegates them to a noncollege track early in their school careers.[38]

Students who succeed in learning English while retaining Spanish tend to do well in school. In a Canadian study, bilingual students scored higher than monolingual students on intelligence tests, possibly because they developed a greater capacity to deal in abstract concepts.[39] Public schools in the United States have adopted a number of strategies to help students who cannot speak English well (see Box 4, page 36), but there is considerable disagreement about the best approach. The growing numbers of first- and second-generation children in schools, including many who speak Asian, European, and African languages, are forcing more schools to confront the language issue.

A Hispanic woman is twice as likely to hold a professional, administrative, or sales job than is a Hispanic male.

Work Lives

Latinos make up an increasing share of the U.S. labor market. In fact, Latinos are more likely to work than non-Hispanics in most age groups. Nearly 13 million Latinos participated in the labor force in 1996, more than 9 percent of all workers.[40] Their share of U.S. workers will increase as more Latino children reach working age.

The labor market experience of U.S. Hispanic groups reflects the migration and settlement history of each group, as well as such human capital attributes as education, training, and English-language skills. Discrimination and prejudice also play a role. Such individual characteristics as skin color, personal appearance, or a strong Spanish accent make many Hispanics an easy target for discrimination in the job market.

Economic changes have affected some Hispanics more than others. Industrial restructuring in the northeastern states, for example, has tightened jobs in the very industries and areas in which Puerto Ricans live and work. Increased unemployment rates among Puerto Ricans probably

Box 4

Bilingual Education

Language is one of the greatest obstacles most new immigrants must overcome. The acquisition of English is a complex process of adaptation between immigrants and the larger social contexts they inhabit.[1] The question of how best to linguistically integrate children into schools has escalated into a politically divisive issue, as more diverse immigrant groups settle in the United States. For example, in 1996, eight bills were introduced in Congress that would make English the sole official language of the United States and outlaw bilingual education.[2]

The debate on bilingual education has essentially two positions. The first position holds that bilingual-education policies impede the learning of English, prolong the process of social integration, and threaten the pre-eminent status of English, thus weakening American ideals. The second position defends bilingual education as a means for limited-English-proficient (LEP) students to gain access to education and academic opportunities that native-born students enjoy. More than 2.1 million schoolchildren (or 5 percent of all public school students) are identified as LEP.[3] The majority are Spanish-speakers, although more than 185 languages are spoken by U.S. schoolchildren.[4]

The founders of the United States believed that English should be the language of the country and that immigrants became "real Americans" by speaking it, but the U.S. government has not had a consistent policy on language use. State governments often had special laws governing language usage. In 1837, Pennsylvania law required school instruction in both German and English.[5]

Although states like New Mexico and California required Spanish and English versions of laws and regulations, 19th-century state education laws reflected an attitude that Spanish-speaking was inferior. In 1858, Texas law required that English be spoken in the public schools even though many school children spoke only Spanish. Negative attitudes toward Spanish language persisted into the 20th century, and many Mexican children were punished for speaking Spanish, even on the playground.[6]

were at least partly caused by these structural changes.[7]

Because of these and other factors, Hispanics tend to be clustered in jobs that are lower-paying, less stable, more hazardous, and less likely to have fringe benefits than are non-Hispanics. Hispanics are more likely than whites, but less likely than blacks, to be unemployed (see Table 8, page 38).

Hispanics are much more likely than whites or blacks to hold blue-collar jobs. In 1996, nearly three-fourths (73 percent) of Hispanic men worked in lower-skilled jobs—in factories, agriculture, or construction or service jobs, for example—compared with 49 percent of white men, and 66 percent of African American men. About 82 percent of foreign-born Hispanic men worked in these jobs, but the percentage was well above that for white men, even among the U.S.-born Hispanics.

Slightly more than one-fourth of Hispanic men worked in such white-collar jobs as managers, professionals, salesmen, or technical and administrative support staff. But this percentage is well below the 51 percent of white men and 34 percent of black men in such jobs. Cubans and U.S.-born Hispanics are much more likely than other Hispanics to have these higher-status and generally better-paying jobs, but they still fall below the percentage for white men.

The approach to teaching non-English speaking students began to change in the post-World War II era. The Bilingual Education Act of 1968 provided funds for bilingual education programs to schools that chose to offer them. This funding has not, however, kept pace with the increase in LEP students. For example, the $157 million appropriation in 1997 was 52 percent below the 1980 amount, adjusted for inflation, although the LEP population continues to grow. About one-half of the school districts in the country already enroll students with limited English proficiency.

In 1974, Congress established the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs within the U.S. Department of Education to help school districts provide equal education opportunities to LEP schoolchildren.

Meanwhile, the debate about language and schooling continues. Bilingual-education programs vary in approach, which makes comparisons difficult across states, districts, and individual schools and classrooms. Most bilingual programs are considered transitional. The ultimate goal is usually to prepare students to enter mainstream English classrooms as quickly as possible.[7]

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The picture is slightly different for Hispanic women. Puerto Rican and Mexican women are less likely to work than other women or than their male counterparts. Mexican and Central and South American women who work are most likely to hold lower-paying, blue-collar jobs. Puerto Rican and Cuban women, in contrast, tend to hold higher-status, professional or administrative jobs than other Hispanic women.

Many Hispanics have jobs that offer few benefits. One-third of Hispanics—about 9.5 million people—were not covered by private or government medical insurance in 1995, compared with about one-fifth of blacks and one-tenth of whites.[7] Although Hispanics are about 11 percent of the population, they made up nearly one-quarter (23 percent) of the 41 million uninsured Americans.

Latinos born outside the United States were almost twice as likely to lack health insurance coverage as their U.S.-born counterparts (41 percent compared with 25 percent). Mexicans and Central and South Americans, who include a large share of first-generation Latinos, were most likely to lack insurance, while Puerto Ricans were the least likely. Almost half (47 percent) of Latino children born outside the United States did not have health coverage, compared with 23 percent of those born in the United States.

Table 8

Selected Labor Force Characteristics by Race and Ethnicity, 1996

Race/ ethnic group	Percent unemployed[1]		Occupation of employed workers[2]			
			Men		Women	
	Men	Women	Professional, administrative, sales	Service, skilled/ unskilled labor	Professional, administrative, sales	Service, skilled/ unskilled labor
Total	7	5	48	52	72	28
Non-Hispanic	6	5	50	50	74	26
White	5	4	51	49	76	24
Black	14	9	38	62	67	33
Other						
Asian/Pacific Islander[3]	5	4	58	42	83	17
Hispanic	10	10	27	73	56	44
Mexican	10	10	23	77	52	48
Puerto Rican	12	9	37	63	64	36
Cuban	6	5	44	56	72	28
Central American						
South American	9	7	39	61	68	32
Other Hispanic	10	7	35	65	60	40
Born in U.S.[4]	12	11	31	69	58	42
Born outside U.S.[5]	9	9	24	76	54	46

[1] Percent of persons ages 16 or older in the labor force.
[2] Percent of employed persons ages 16 or older.
[3] Includes Asian, Pacific Islanders, American Indians, Eskimos, Aleuts, and other non-Hispanics.
[4] Includes Puerto Ricans born outside the 50 states and the District of Columbia.
[5] Includes Puerto Ricans born outside the 50 states and the District of Columbia.
Source: Authors' calculations based on the March 1996 Current Population Survey.

Family Income

The median income of Latino families has been below that of white families but above that of African-American families since figures became available in 1972. In 1979, the median income of Hispanic family households was about $29,200 (in 1995 dollars), compared with $42,800 for white families and $23,800 for black families. In 1995, however, the Hispanics median family income was $24,600, lower than the 1979 figure, and further below that of non-Hispanic whites ($45,000).[7] And for the first time since 1972, Hispanic family incomes slipped below that of African Americans ($26,000).

Despite the low averages, many Latino families are solidly middle class, and a growing number have incomes well above the national median. The growth of the Latino middle class is creating an important new national market for business, and has influenced the types of products, services, and even sports events available in areas with large Hispanic populations. Hispanic buying power is growing at three times the rate of inflation, and is projected to be $348 billion in 1997, according to the University of Georgia's Selig Center for Economic Growth.

Nearly one-fifth of Hispanic family households had incomes of $50,000 or more in 1995, about the same percentage as African American family households (see Figure 12). The percentage was higher for Cuban families—close to one-third had incomes of $50,000 or more—but still well below the share of white families in the higher income group (44 percent).

Also, about one-sixth of Hispanic families received less than $10,000 in 1995, three times the percentage of white families. About one-fourth of Puerto Rican families fell into the lowest income category, compared with only one-tenth of Cuban families. Interestingly, the proportion of very low-income families maintained by Latino householders born in the United States (15 percent) was similar to that for householders born abroad (17 percent).

Since poverty statistics have been collected for Latinos, Hispanic families have had a poverty rate at least twice that of non-Hispanic families. In the 1970s, about one-fifth of Hispanic families were in poverty, compared with about one-fifteenth of white families, and just over one-fourth of blacks.[8]

Although the poverty rate has fluctuated with economic cycles over the past 25 years, the trend has been upward, especially for Hispanic families. In the economic recession of the early 1980s, the poverty rate rose above 30 percent for blacks, above 25 percent for Hispanics, and above 8 percent for white families. As the economy recovered, the poverty rates fell faster for whites and blacks than for Hispanics. In 1995, more than

one-quarter (27 percent) of Hispanic families had incomes below the poverty level, about the same level as for black families, and more than four times the rate for non-Hispanic white families. Nearly half of Hispanic families headed by women were poor, compared with 45 percent of black, and 22 percent of white female-headed families.

The poverty rate is higher for Hispanic families headed by a foreign-born person than a U.S.-born person, which reflects the lower incomes and education levels of immigrants.

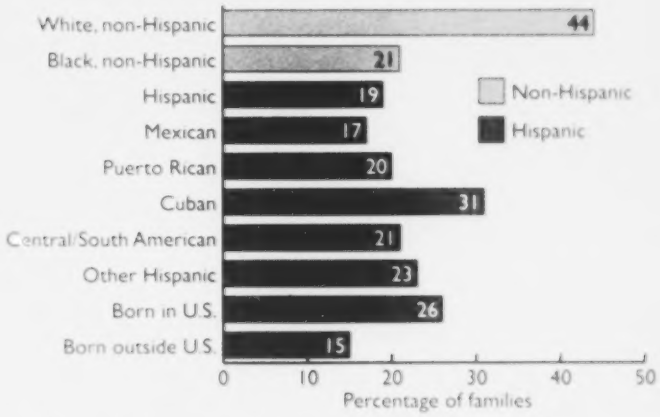
Among specific Hispanic groups, Puerto Rican and Mexican families are most likely to be poor, while Cubans are least likely. In 1995, more than one in three Puerto Rican families had incomes below the poverty level, as did nearly two in three families headed by a Puerto Rican woman. Although Cubans have relatively high education and income levels, on average, the poverty rate for Cuban families exceeds the national average and is about twice that of non-Hispanic whites in 1995, as shown in Table 9, page 40.

Why do Hispanics have such low income and such high poverty rates? Many analysts trace it to discrimination and unfair treatment. They argue that many Hispanics are kept in low-achieving education tracks, led toward low-status jobs, and discriminated against in hiring and promotion. Individuals who have a strong accent or a dark complexion are especially at risk of such discrimination. Researchers have found, for example, that Mexicans with a dark complexion earn less than light-skinned Mexicans, even after accounting for differences in education.[7]

Immigration trends also have increased overall poverty rates. Recent immigrants are like any new entrant to the labor force. They tend to have fewer skills that are valuable to U.S. employers, fewer years of relevant experience, and lower seniority than other workers.[8] Thus, they are likely to earn entry-level salaries in lower-skilled jobs.

Figure 12

Families with Incomes of $50,000 or More by Race and Ethnic Group, 1995



Source: Author's calculations based on the March 1996 Current Population Survey.

Welfare Use

Hispanic immigrants in poverty are less likely to use welfare than poor U.S.-born Hispanics or blacks. In 1993, just over one-fourth of Hispanics participated in a welfare program such as Aid to Families with Dependent Children, housing assistance, or Medicaid, compared with one-third of blacks.[9] Immigrants could not qualify for assistance until they had lived in the United States at least five years, which probably decreased welfare use by needy families.

Recent welfare and immigration reforms are likely to reduce Hispanic immigrants' use of public assistance further. Laws that deny assistance to noncitizens, which could affect millions of Hispanics, may be overturned, but the movement to limit welfare eligibility continues.

Naturalization and Citizenship

Immigrants from Latin American countries, particularly Mexico, have low rates of naturalization compared with immigrants from Asian countries. Without U.S. citizenship, the foreign-born have limited opportunities and a weak political voice within the United States. Immigrants who naturalize are

Table 9

Family Income and Poverty Rates by Race and Ethnicity: United States, 1995

Race/ ethnic group	Number of families (1000s)	Family income in 1995 (percent)			Percent below poverty		
		Under $10,000	$10,000-$24,999	$25,000 or more	All families	Female-headed	Elderly
Total	69,597	7	21	72	11	32	6
Non-Hispanic	63,311	7	20	74	9	30	5
White	52,861	5	18	77	6	22	4
Black	7,871	19	29	51	26	45	17
Other non-Hispanic	2,579	12	20	68	15	33	10
Hispanic	6,287	16	35	49	27	49	18
Mexican	3,815	15	37	47	28	50	18
Puerto Rican	742	26	29	45	36	64	19
Cuban	512	10	28	62	16	29	12
Central/South American	925	11	35	54	22	35	19
Other Hispanic	489	20	26	54	25	50	20
Born in U.S.	2,466	13	29	56	22	47	16
Born outside U.S.[1]	3,821	17	38	45	30	51	20

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding.
Non-Hispanic American Indian, Eskimo, Aleut, Asian, and Pacific Islander.
Includes Puerto Rican householders born outside the 50 states and the District of Columbia.
Householder is age 65 or older.
Source: Authors' calculations based on the March 1996 Current Population Survey.

conferred all the rights and privileges that come with U.S. citizenship (except that they may not hold the two highest elected offices), including the right to vote, the right to work, and the right to sponsor foreign-born relatives to immigrate to the United States.

Nearly 45 percent of those immigrants admitted from the 15 leading countries of origin during the 1970s were naturalized by 1995. Of the four Latin American countries on the list, three (Mexico, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic) had naturalization rates well below the average. The rate for Colombia, the fourth Latin American country, was just above the average—51 percent of the 1970s immigrants from Colombia had naturalized by 1995. Asian countries had the highest naturalization rates, led by Vietnam. More than 96 percent of the Vietnamese who entered during the 1970s—primarily as refugees—had become citizens by 1995.

Immigrants may become citizens if they are at least 18 years of age, have been lawfully admitted to the United States for permanent residence, and have resided in the country continuously for at least five years. Adults must be able to speak, read, and write in English, have a basic knowledge of the U.S. government and U.S. history, and possess "good moral character."[80] Children born in the United States are granted citizenship automatically; foreign-born children under age 18 can derive citizenship through their parents if their parents naturalize.

The share of foreign-born residents choosing to become citizens has been higher in the mid-1990s than at any time in the past 50 years. In 1996, 1.3 million permanent residents were naturalized, more than four times the number in 1993, the previous high point.

Several legal, political, and bureaucratic changes have helped boost naturalization rates. The INS has launched a campaign to encourage immigrants to naturalize and has stepped up efforts to reduce a substantial backlog in naturalization applica-

tions. A Green Card Replacement Program begun in 1996 also encouraged permanent resident aliens to file for naturalization when they contacted the INS to replace expired identity cards. In addition, welfare reform passed in 1996 excludes noncitizens from receiving some government transfers such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Medicaid. These changes prompted many immigrants, particularly the elderly, to naturalize. And the nearly 3 million immigrants granted legal status through IRCA have completed the five-year residency requirement for naturalization.

Despite their low naturalization rates, Latin Americans made up more than one-third of the nearly one-half million immigrants who became citizens in 1995. Mexico represented 15 percent of all naturalizations, more than twice any other group. Cuba, Colombia, El Salvador, and the Dominican Republic were the other top countries of origin for these new Americans.

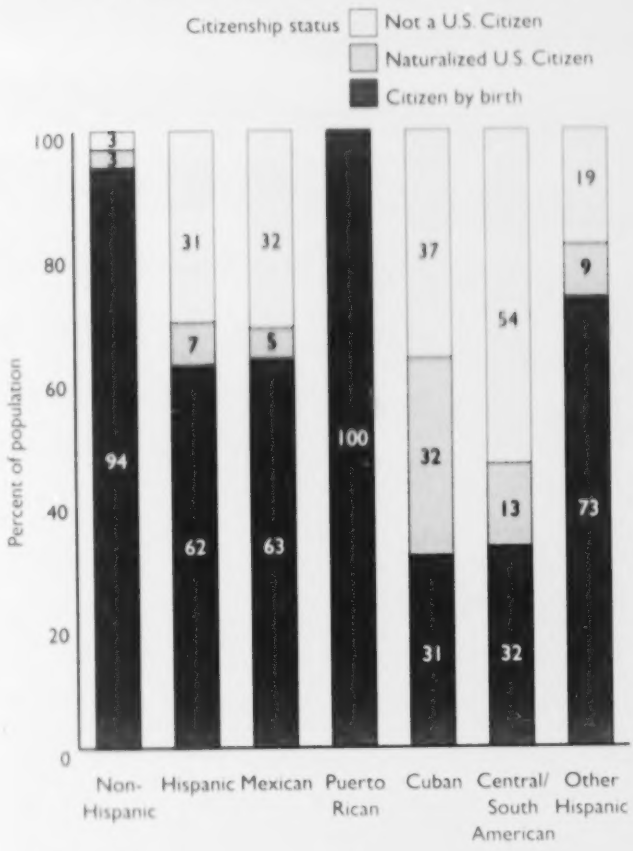
Nevertheless, nearly one-third of U.S. Hispanics are not citizens (see Figure 13).

Generally, naturalization patterns reflect the historical pathways of each group. Immigrant groups that arrive as political refugees, such as most Cubans, are more likely to naturalize, perhaps because they have already severed ties to their birthplace. Most could not return to Cuba. Mexican immigrants, on the other hand, often retain strong links to their native country through travel, visits from Mexican relatives, and relatively inexpensive communications networks. The Central and South American group, while heterogeneous, is the most recent immigrant group. Although the proportion foreign-born is similar to the Cuban population, the lower proportion of immigrants who naturalized reflects their recency and perhaps a more ambivalent future in the United States.

Motivation to seek citizenship also is tied to socioeconomic characteristics. Immigrants who are younger,

Figure 13

Citizenship Status by Hispanic Ethnic Group, 1996



Note: Percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding.
Source: Authors' calculations based on the March 1996 Current Population Survey.

speak English well, have high educational and occupational status, and whose relatives are U.S. citizens are more likely to naturalize than other immigrants.[41] The Cubans' higher average education and income levels help explain why they are the Latino group most likely to become citizens.

Those who become citizens could strengthen the political voice and participation of all Latinos in U.S. society. The more than 3.5 million undocumented migrants from Spanish-speaking countries will remain disenfranchised, as will the majority of immigrants, if they choose

[41]

not to become citizens. The children of both groups, however, will automatically be U.S. citizens with full voting rights, and will expand further the Hispanic electorate.

Political Voice

Although the Latino population is growing rapidly, they have low voter turnout and are underrepresented among elected and appointed officials. Two distinctive demographic characteristics of this population, its youthful age structure and large immigrant population, are partly responsible for the low political participation. More than one-fifth (22 percent) of all Latinos of voting age are 18 to 24, the ages least likely to vote, while 14 percent of the total population are in these ages. Furthermore, more than one-third of the Latino population are less than 18 years of age—too young to vote, while just over one-fourth of all Americans are under age 18. Only 16 percent of the Latino population are in the age group that votes the most, ages 55 and older, compared with 28 percent of the total population.[7] Many Latinos of voting age are not naturalized citizens, which diminishes the pool of potential voters. In 1996, about 12 percent of Latinos ages 18 and over were not naturalized U.S. citizens. In contrast, only 12 percent of Hispanics under age 18 were not citizens.[8] The voting power of Latinos could be augmented greatly if more foreign-born Latinos became naturalized citizens. In addition, Latino political influence potentially could grow rapidly in the next two decades as second- and higher-generation children reach voting age.

More than one-fifth (22 percent) of all Latinos of voting age are 18 to 24, the ages least likely to vote.

Hispanics historically have had more political clout in states and cities where they are a large proportion of the voting-age population, such as New Mexico, California, and Texas. Political scientist Louis DeSipio points out that although Latinos are united on some issues, few Latinos believe that there are common political bonds across the national-origin groups.[9]

Hispanic American Federico Peña has served as Mayor of Denver and as U.S. Secretary of Transportation. He currently is U.S. Secretary of Energy.

Voting

Hispanic citizens of voting age have many of the socioeconomic and demographic characteristics associated with low voter turnout. In general, people over age 45, and with above-average incomes and educational attainment, have the highest rates of voter participation. Hispanics, on average, are younger and have lower income and education levels than the majority.

About 31 percent of Hispanics 18 years and over reported they were registered to vote in the November 1994 Congressional elections, but only 20 percent reported voting. In contrast, 65 percent of whites registered and 47 percent voted; among blacks, 59 percent registered and 37 percent voted.[10]

The percentage of Hispanics who voted rises to 34 when only those eligible to vote are included in the calculation. This proportion is similar to that reported for elections dating back to at least 1980.[11] This voting record is still substantially below those for whites, and close to the share for African Americans. The turnout for eligible white voters in the 1994

45

45

election was 50 percent, and 39 percent for eligible African American and Asian voters.

The ethnic and racial gap in voter participation is narrower among college students. Although Hispanics were somewhat less likely than whites or blacks to register, there was little difference among racial and ethnic groups in the percentage who voted. Twenty-five percent of Latinos, 24 percent of African Americans, and 29 percent of whites ages 18 to 24 and enrolled in college reported voting in 1994. Among young adults who were not in college, voter participation dropped to 6 percent for Hispanics, 16 percent for blacks, and 18 percent for whites.

Elected Officials

The number of Hispanic elected officials has increased at all levels of government, although they still account for a small percentage of the total. The number of Latinos holding public office throughout the United States stood at 5,459 in 1994, slightly more than 1 percent of all elected officials.[7] Since 1984, however, the number has increased 48 percent.

In 1994, about 84 percent of all Latino elected officials were in four states: Texas, Illinois, California, and New Mexico. Arizona, Colorado, New York, Florida, Illinois, and New Jersey also elected notable numbers of Hispanics.

Women claimed about 40 percent of the offices held by Hispanics, while women hold 24 percent of all elected offices.

The largest percentage increase in Hispanic elected officials has been at the federal level. While there were only 10 members of Hispanic origin in the U.S. Congress in 1989, there were 17 voting members and two nonvoting members of Hispanic origin in June 1997. Six were from Texas, four from California, two each from Florida and New York, and one each from Arizona, Illinois, and New Jersey. Puerto Rico and Guam each send a nonvoting Hispanic delegate to the U.S. Congress.

Despite the increase in Hispanic Congressional members, the number falls well short of the 37 to 58 representatives that would represent the Latino population's 11 percent share of the U.S. population.

Hispanics have made modest gains in their representation among high-level appointed officials in recent years. President Clinton named two Hispanics to his cabinet: Henry Cisneros (former Secretary of Housing and Urban Development) and Federico Peña (first as Secretary of Transportation and then as Secretary of Energy). A second-generation Hispanic, Bill Richardson, former member of Congress from New Mexico, was named U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations in 1997, the highest government office ever held by a Hispanic American.

Latinos and America's Future

Hispanic Americans are a growing presence in the nation's schools, work places, and electorate. They soon will form the majority of the school children in our largest state, California. As this diverse group increases in numbers, surpassing the African American population early in the 21st century, their well-being increasingly will affect the country's well-being. Many in the non-Hispanic majority think of Hispanic Americans as newcomers who are reluctant to embrace the language and behavior of mainstream American society. That perception is fueled by waves of new immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean that continue to renew the Latino population of the United States. About two-thirds of the 28 million Latinos residing in the United States in 1996 were immigrants or the children of immigrants.

The geographic concentration of the U.S. Latino population may contribute to their image as newcomers because many live in ethnic communities where Spanish is heard as often as English. The vast majority of Hispanics live in the Southwest, or

in the New York, Miami, or Chicago metropolitan areas. Even so, Latinos contribute to the labor force in rural and suburban areas throughout the country, and live in the cities and suburbs of every U.S. state. Further, Hispanics represent distinct ethnic and national origin groups. Recent immigration trends accentuate the ethnic diversity of this growing group of Americans.

Despite the important role of immigration in shaping the demographic as well as the public image of Hispanics, fertility will fuel most of the future growth. Hispanic women, and Mexican women in particular, have among the highest birth rates of any racial or ethnic group in the United States. Immigration contributes to the high birth rates because foreign-born Hispanic women tend to have substantially higher fertility than U.S.-born Hispanic women. Whether Hispanic fertility converges with the national average will depend on the level of immigration and the extent to which Hispanic women adopt preferences for smaller families and marry outside their ethnic group.

Increasing educational attainment is also likely to result in lower fertility among Hispanics, but more important, education will be the key to improving the socioeconomic status of the next generation. Education is perhaps the most important determinant of social status and economic well-being in the United States, and Latinos' educational levels lag far behind those of the rest of the nation. Keeping Hispanic students in high school until they graduate and increasing their presence in college are major challenges for the nation in the 21st century.

Many Hispanic youths face substantial barriers to successful school careers: limited English proficiency, low expectations, and often tentative support from parents who had little education and who are uncomfortable advocating for their children in the school system. Much of the burden of improving the educational achievement of Hispanic students falls on financially strapped school systems in large metropolitan areas, where the majority of Hispanics live.

The factors that constrain Hispanics' educational attainment also affect their labor market participation. Lower than average education and skill levels and limited English-language ability, reinforced by discrimination and prejudice, have meant that Hispanics cluster in lower-paying, less stable, and more hazardous occupations. They are less likely to have jobs that offer fringe benefits such as health insurance, and more likely to be unemployed or poor than non-Hispanic whites.

Yet many Latino families are solidly middle class, and a growing number have incomes well above the national median. The growth of the Latino middle class is creating an important new national market for business, and has influenced the types of products, services, and even sports events available in areas with large Hispanic populations. The future potential of the Latino market is enormous because of the growing number of households, but it will be even greater if more Latinos improve their educational and labor market status and move into the middle class.

Likewise, Hispanics have the potential to exert stronger political power. Their political voice has been weak, reflecting their relative youth, low income and education levels, and their large noncitizen population. Recent increases in immigrants naturalization rates could bring more Hispanics into the political process. As Hispanics increase in number and as more U.S. Hispanics move into higher income and age brackets, their political representation is likely to increase. The potential is great for Hispanics to participate more actively in all aspects of U.S. society, and there is much that public and private institutions can do to smooth the way. As Hispanics make up a growing share of the U.S. population, their successes will benefit all Americans.

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Discussion Questions

1. Describe the regional and urban–rural distribution of the Hispanic population in the United States. What are the patterns of settlement of different Hispanic ethnic groups?

2. Identify the most significant international migration streams for different Hispanic ethnic groups. What factors contributed to these migration flows?

3. Explain why the Hispanic population is growing faster than the non-Hispanic white and African-American populations.

4. Discuss how the changing Hispanic population will affect your state or region in terms of population size, racial and ethnic distribution, age distribution, and socioeconomic issues. How does this compare with the affect of Hispanics on the national culture and economy? Use data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census (http://www.census.gov) to support your theories.

5. Compare the marital status and household characteristics of whites, blacks, and Hispanics. What are the implications of these characteristics for social and economic policy?

6. Given the immigration trends among Hispanics, discuss the merits and drawbacks to bilingual education programs and initiatives to establishing English as the sole official language.

7. Analyze the reasons for the low rates of naturalization among Hispanic immigrants—particularly Mexicans as compared with other immigrants. What are the legal, political, and socioeconomic ramifications of this low rate of naturalization?

Discussion questions prepared by Kimberly A. Crews

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